SAKOONTALÁ;

OR,

THE LOST RING;

AN INDIAN DRAMA,

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH PROSE AND VERSE,

FROM THE SANSKRIT OF KÁLIDÁSA:

BY

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

COLONEL BODEN,

OF THE HONORABLE EAST-INDIA COMPANY'S SERVICE,

WHO,

BY HIS MUNIFICENT BEQUEST,

HAS PROVIDED FOR THE PERPETUAL STUDY

OF THE SANSKRIT LANGUAGE

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD;

THIS VOLUME

IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

A FORMER SCHOLAR ON HIS FOUNDATION.

INTRODUCTION.

Only seventy years have elapsed since the great English Orientalist, Sir William Jones, astonished the learned world by the discovery of a Sanskṛit Dramatic Literature. He has himself given us the history of this discovery. It appears that, on his arrival in Bengal, he was very solicitous to procure access to certain books called Náṭaks, of which he had read in one of the 'Lettres Édifiantes et Curieuses,' written by the Jesuit Missionaries of China. But, although he sought information by consulting both Bráhmans and Europeans, he was wholly unable for some time to satisfy his curiosity as to the nature of these books. It was reported to him that they were not histories, as he had hoped, but that they abounded with fables, and consisted of conversations in prose and verse held before ancient Rájás, in their public assemblies. Others, again, asserted that they were discourses on dancing, music, and poetry. At length, a sensible Bráhman, conversant with European manners, removed all his doubts, and gave him no less delight

than surprise by telling him that the English nation had compositions of the same sort, which were publicly represented at Calcutta in the cold season, and bore the name of Plays. The same Bráhman, when asked which of these Nátaks was most universally esteemed, answered without hesitation, 'Śakoontalá.'

It may readily be imagined with what interest the keen Orientalist received this communication; with what rapidity he followed up the clue; and, when at length his zeal was rewarded by actual possession of a MS. copy of one of these dramas, with what avidity he proceeded to explore the treasures which for eighteen hundred years had remained as unknown to the European world as the gold-fields of Australia. Indeed, it has now been ascertained that the antiquity of some of the Sanskṛit dramas thus brought to light, extends back to a still more remote period than the commencement of the Christian era.

The earliest with which we are acquainted, 'The Toy-Cart,' translated by Professor H. H. Wilson, is attributed to a regal author, king Súdraka, whose reign is generally fixed in the second century B.C., and it is not improbable that others, the names of which only have been preserved, may belong to a previous century. Considering that the nations of Europe can scarcely be said to have possessed a

dramatic literature before the fourteenth or fifteenth century of the present era, the great age of the Hindú plays would of itself be a most interesting and attractive circumstance, even if their poetical merit were not of a very high order. But when to the antiquity of these productions is added their extreme beauty and excellence as literary compositions, and when we also take into account their value as representations of the early condition of Hindú society—which, notwithstanding the lapse of two thousand years, has in many particulars obeyed the law of unchangeableness ever stamped on the manners and customs of the East—we are led to wonder that the study of the Indian drama has not commended itself in a greater degree to the attention of Europeans, and especially of Englishmen. The English student, at least, is bound by considerations of duty, as well as curiosity, to make himself acquainted with a subject which illustrates and explains the condition of the millions of Hindús who owe allegiance to his own Sovereign and are governed by English laws.

Of all Indian dramatists, and indeed of all Indian poets, the most celebrated is Kálidása, the writer of the present play. He comes next in date to the author of the 'Toy-cart;' and although little is known of the circumstances of his life, yet there is satisfactory

evidence to prove that he lived in the time of King Vikramáditya I., whose capital was Ujjayiní, now Oujein (a sacred and very ancient city situated to the north-east of Gujarát), and who flourished in the middle of the century preceding the commencement of our era.

From the absence of historical literature in India, our knowledge of the state of Hindústán between the incursion of Alexander and the Muhammadan conquest is very slight. But it is ascertained with tolerable accuracy that, after the invasion of the kingdoms of Bactria and Afghánistán, the Tartars or Scythians (called by the Hindús 'Śakas') overran the north-western provinces of India, and retained possession of them till the reign of Vikramáditya. This great monarch succeeded in driving back the barbaric hordes beyond the Indus, and so consolidated his empire that his dominion extended over the whole of Northern Hindústán. His name is even now cherished among the Hindús with pride and affection, and the date of his victory over the Scythians, B.C. 56, is the starting-point of the Samvat era, from which they still continue to count. There is good authority for affirming that the reign of Vikramáditya I. was equal in brilliancy to that of any monarch in any age or country. He was a liberal patron of science and literature, and gave the most splendid encouragement to poets, philologists,

astronomers, and mathematicians. Nine illustrious men of genius adorned his court, and were supported by his bounty. They were called the 'Nine Gems;' and Kálidása is by general consent allowed to have been the brightest of the nine. To him (as to another celebrated Indian Dramatist, Bhavabhúti, who flourished in the eighth century) only three plays are attributed; and of these the 'Śakoontalá' (here translated) has acquired the greatest celebrity.*

Indeed, the popularity of this play with the natives of India exceeds that of any other dramatic, and probably of any other poetical composition.† But it is

* Of the other two, the most celebrated, called Vikramorvaśí, has been excellently translated by Professor H. H. Wilson, and will be found in his 'Hindú Theatre.'

† The following extract from the *Bombay Times* reached the Translator too late for insertion in the Preface to the previous editions. It is given *literatim*, and—in spite of the orthographical errors and ludicrous mutilation of the story—is interesting as showing that the popularity of the 'Śakoontalá' with the Hindús of the present day has been deemed sufficient to justify an attempt at reproducing it on the Indian stage:—

"HINDU DRAMA.

"SATURDAY, 3RD FEBRUARY, 1855.

"An outline of the play to be performed at the Grand Road Theatre this night.

"After a short discourse between the Sutradhar (the chief actor), and the Vidushaka (the clown), Surswati (the Goddess of learning), will appear. Sutradhar will call his wife (Nati), and they will determine on

not in India alone that the 'Śakoontalá' is known and admired. Its excellence is now recognized in every literary circle throughout the continent of Europe; and its beauties, if not yet universally known and appreciated, are at least acknowledged by many learned men in every country of the civilized world. The

performing the play of Shakuntala. They both will sing songs together, after which Nati will go away. The play will then regularly commence. Dushanta Rajah will appear in the Court, and order his Pradhan (the Minister) to make preparations for a hunting excursion. The Rajah sitting in his carriage will pursue a stag, the stag will disappear, upon which Dushanta will ask his coachman the cause thereof, this being known, the Rajah in his carriage will proceed farther, when they will see the stag again, upon which he will aim an arrow at the stag. The stag will run and reach the retirement of Waikhanas Rushi. The sage will come out of his hut and remonstrate with the Rajah against his killing the harmless animal. The Rajah will obey the injunctions of the sage, who will pronounce benedictions upon him. According to the Rushi's instructions, he will prepare to proceed to the residence of another sage named Kunwa. Bidding each other farewell, the Rushi will go to procure material for his religious ceremonies. After reaching Kunwa's place, and commanding his coachman to groom the horses, the Rajah will walk forth to the sage's hut. Observing on his way thither Shakuntala with her fellow mates watering the trees, he will hide himself behind a tree. Shakuntala will praise to her mates the beauty of the Keshar tree. Charmed with overhearing her discourse, Dushanta will try to find out her descent. Shakuntala will be very much teased by a Bhramar (fly) hovering about her face. The Rajah will then come forward and ask the cause of the disturbed state of her mind. After a mutual exchange of polite respect they all take their seats beneath a shady tree, Dushanta will inform her of his country and descent, whereupon they will all go to the Rushi's hut.

"Here there is a pause.

"A pleasing farce will then be performed."

four well-known lines of Goethe, so often quoted in relation to the Indian drama, may here be repeated:

"Willst du die Blüthe des frühen, die Früchte des späteren Jahres,
Willst du was reizt und ergötzt, willst du was sättigt und nährt,
Willst du den Himmel, die Erde, mit einem Namen begreifen:
Nenn' ich Sakontalá, Dich, und so ist Alles gesagt."

"Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its decline,
And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed?
Would thou the earth and heaven itself in one sole name combine?
I name thee, O Śakoontala! and all at once is said."

Augustus William von Schlegel, in his first Lecture on Dramatic Literature, says: "Among the Indians, the people from whom perhaps all the cultivation of the human race has been derived, plays were known long before they could have experienced any foreign influence. It has lately been made known in Europe that they have a rich dramatic literature, which ascends back for more than two thousand years. The only specimen of their plays (Nátaks) hitherto known to us is the delightful 'Śakoontalá,' which, notwithstanding the colouring of a foreign clime, bears in its general structure a striking resemblance to our romantic drama."

Alexander von Humboldt, in treating of Indian poetry, observes: "Kálidása, the celebrated author of the 'Śakoontalá,' is a masterly describer of the influence which Nature exercises upon the minds of lovers. This great poet flourished at the splendid court of

Vikramáditya, and was, therefore, cotemporary with Virgil and Horace. Tenderness in the expression of feeling, and richness of creative fancy, have assigned to him his lofty place among the poets of all nations."

These considerations induced me, in 1853, to compile and publish a correct edition of the text of the 'Śakoontalá' from various original MSS., with English translations of the metrical passages, and explanatory notes, being in fact the only edition ever published in this country. To the notes of that edition I must refer all students of Sanskṛit literature who desire a close and literal translation of the present drama. In the Preface I pledged myself at some future time to present the English public with a *free* translation of the whole play. That pledge is here redeemed, and the following pages contain the first English translation, in prose and verse, of the true and pure version of the most celebrated drama of the Shakspere of India.

The need felt by the British public for some such translation as I have here offered, can scarcely be questioned. A great people, who, through their empire in India, command the destinies of the Eastern world, ought surely to be conversant with the most popular of Indian dramas, in which the customs of the Hindús, their opinions, prejudices, and fables, their religious rites, daily occupations and amuse-

ments, are reflected as in a mirror. Nor is the prose translation of Sir W. Jones (excellent though it be) adapted to meet the requirements of the Englishman who, unacquainted with Sanskṛit, desires an accurate representation of the original text, and notes to explain unintelligible allusions. That translation was unfortunately made from modern and corrupt manuscripts (the best that could then be procured), in which the bold and nervous phraseology of Kálidása has been weakened, his delicate expressions of refined love clothed in a meretricious dress, and his ideas, grand in their simplicity, diluted by repetition or amplification. It is, moreover, altogether unfurnished with explanatory annotations. The text of my edition, on the contrary, represents the old and pure version of the drama, and from that text the present translation has been made; while abundant notes have been added, sufficient to answer the exigencies of the non-oriental scholar. Moreover, the metrical portions of the play have, for the first time, been rendered into verse.

It may be remarked that in every Sanskṛit play the women and inferior characters speak a kind of provincial Sanskṛit or *patois*, called Prákṛit—bearing the same relation to Sanskṛit that Italian bears to Latin, or that the spoken Latin of the age of Cicero bore to the highly polished Latin in which he delivered his

Orations. Even the heroine of the drama is made to speak in the vulgar dialect. The hero, on the other hand, and all the higher male characters, speak in Sanskṛit; and, as if to invest them with greater dignity, half of what they say is in verse. Indeed the prose part of their speeches is often very common-place, being only introductory to the lofty sentiment of the poetry that follows. Thus, if the whole composition be compared to a web, the prose will correspond to the warp, or that part which is extended lengthwise in the loom, while the metrical portion will answer to the cross-threads which constitute the woof. The original verses are written in a great variety of Sanskṛit metres. For example, the first thirty-four verses of 'Śakoontalá' exhibit eleven different varieties of metre. No metrical system in English could give any idea of the almost infinite resources of the Sanskṛit in this respect. Blank verse has therefore been employed, as more in unison with the character of our own dramatic writings, and rhyming stanzas have only been admitted when the subject-matter seemed to call for such a change. Perhaps the chief consideration that induced me to adopt this mode of metrical translation was, that the free and unfettered character of the verse enabled me to preserve more of the freshness and vigour of the original. If the poetical ideas of Kálidása have not

been expressed in language as musical as his own, I have at least done my best to avoid diluting them by paraphrastic circumlocutions or additions. If the English verses are prosaic, I have the satisfaction of knowing that by resisting the allurements of rhyme, I have done all in my power to avoid substituting a fictitious and meagre poem of my own for the grand, yet simple and chaste creation of Kálidása. The unrestricted liberty of employing hypermetrical lines of eleven syllables, sanctioned by the highest authority in dramatic composition, has, I think, facilitated the attainment of this object. One of our own poets has said in relation to such lines, 'Let it be remembered that they supply us with another cadence; that they add, as it were, a string to the instrument; and—by enabling the poet to relax at pleasure, to rise and fall with his subject—contribute what is most wanted, compass and variety. They are nearest to the flow of an unstudied eloquence, and should therefore be used in the drama.'* Shakspere does not scruple to avail himself of this license four or five times in succession, as in the well-known passage beginning—

"To be or not to be, that is the question;"

and even Milton uses the same freedom once or twice in every page.

* Rogers' 'Italy,' note to line 23.

The poetical merit of Kálidása's 'Śakoontalá' is so universally admitted that any remarks on this head would be superfluous. I will merely observe that, in the opinion of learned natives, the Fourth Act, which describes the departure of Śakoontalá from the hermitage, contains the most obvious beauties; and that no one can read this act, nor indeed any part of the play, without being struck with the richness and elevation of its author's genius, the exuberance and glow of his fancy, his ardent love of the beautiful, his deep sympathy with Nature and Nature's loveliest scenes, his profound knowledge of the human heart, his delicate appreciation of its most refined feelings, his familiarity with its conflicting sentiments and emotions. But in proportion to the acknowledged excellence of Kálidása's composition, and in proportion to my own increasing admiration of its beauties, is the diffidence I feel lest I may have failed to infuse any of the poetry of the original into the present version. Translation of poetry must, at the best, resemble the process of pouring a highly volatile and evanescent spirit from one receptacle into another. The original fluid will always suffer a certain amount of waste and evaporation.

The English reader, remembering that the author of the 'Śakoontalá' lived in the century preceding the

Christian era, will at least be inclined to wonder at the analogies which it offers to our own dramatic composition of fifteen or sixteen centuries later. The dexterity with which the plot is arranged and conducted, the ingenuity with which the incidents are connected, the skill with which the characters are delineated and contrasted with each other, the boldness and felicity of the diction, would scarcely be unworthy of the great dramatists of modern times. Nor does the parallel fail in the management of the business of the stage, in minute directions to the actors, and various scenic artifices. The asides and aparts, the exits and the entrances, the manner, attitude, and gait of the speakers, the tone of voice with which they are to deliver themselves, the tears, the smiles, and the laughter, are as regularly indicated as in a modern drama.

In reference to the constitution and structure of the play here translated, a few general remarks on the dramatic system of the Hindús may not be inappropriate.*

Dramatic poetry is said to have been invented by the sage Bharata, who lived at a very remote period of Indian history, and was the author of a system of

* The admirable Essay by Professor H. H. Wilson, prefixed to his 'Hindú Theatre,' is the principal source of information on this subject.

music. The drama of these early times was probably nothing more than a species of rude pantomime, in which music and dancing were accompanied by mute gesticulation. There is little trace of real dramatic dialogue until the second century B.C., and the art of theatrical representation was not brought to perfection till the era of Vikramáditya. In India, as in Greece, scenic entertainments took place at religious festivals, and on solemn public occasions. Kálidása's 'Śakoontalá' seems to have been acted at the commencement of the summer-season—a period peculiarly sacred to Káma-deva, the Indian god of Love. We are told that it was enacted before an audience 'consisting chiefly of men of education and discernment.' As the greater part of every play was written in Sanskṛit, which, although spoken in some portion of India at a remote period, was certainly not the vernacular language of the country at the time when the Hindú dramas were performed, few spectators would be present who were not of the learned and educated classes. This circumstance is in accordance with the constitution of Hindú society, whereby the productions of literature, as well as the offices of state, were reserved for the privileged castes.*

* *See* Wilson's "Hindú Theatre" p. xiii.

Every play opens with a prologue, or, to speak more correctly, an introduction, designed to prepare the way for the entrance of the *dramatis personæ*. The prologue commences with a benediction or prayer (pronounced by a Bráhman, or if the stage-manager happened to be of the Bráhmanical caste, by the manager himself), in which the poet invokes the favour of the national deity in behalf of the audience. The blessing is generally followed by a dialogue between the manager and one or two of the actors, in which an account is given of the author of the drama, a complimentary tribute is paid to the critical acumen of the spectators, and such a reference is made to past occurrences or present circumstances as may be necessary for the elucidation of the plot. At the conclusion of the prologue, the manager, by some abrupt exclamation, adroitly introduces one of the dramatic personages, and the real performance commences.

The play, being thus opened, is carried forward in scenes and acts; each scene being marked by the entrance of one character and the exit of another, as in the French drama. The *dramatis personæ* were divided into three classes—the inferior characters (*nicha*), who were said to speak Prákṛit in a monotonous unemphatic tone of voice (*anudáttoktyá*); the middling (*madhyama*), and the superior (*pradhána*),

who were said to speak Sanskṛit with accent, emphasis, and expression (*udáttoktyá*). In general, the stage is never left vacant till the end of an act, nor does any change of locality take place until then. The commencement of a new act is often marked, like the commencement of the piece, by an introductory monologue or dialogue spoken by one or more of the *dramatis personæ*, and called Vishkambha or Praveśaka. In this scene allusion is frequently made to events supposed to have occurred in the interval of the acts, and the audience is the better prepared to take up the thread of the story, which is then skilfully carried on to the concluding scene. The piece closes, as it began, with a prayer for national plenty and prosperity, addressed to the favourite deity, and spoken by one of the principal personages of the drama.

Although, in the conduct of the plot, and the delineation of character, the Hindú dramatists show considerable skill, yet they do not appear to have been remarkable for much fertility of invention. Love, according to Hindú notions, is the subject of most of their dramas. The hero, who is generally a king, and already the husband of a wife or wives (for a wife or two more or less is no encumbrance in Indian plays), is suddenly smitten with the charms of a lovely woman, sometimes a nymph, or, as in the case of

'Śakoontalá,' the daughter of a nymph by a mortal father. The heroine is required to be equally impressible, and the first tender glance from the hero's eye reaches her heart. With true feminine delicacy, however, she locks the secret of her passion in her own breast, and by her coyness and reserve keeps her lover for a long period in the agonies of suspense. The hero, being reduced to a proper state of desperation, is harassed by other difficulties. Either the celestial nature of the nymph is in the way of their union, or he doubts the legality of the match, or he fears his own unworthiness, or he is hampered by the angry jealousy of a previous wife. In short, doubts, obstacles and delays make great havoc of both hero and heroine. They give way to melancholy, indulge in amorous rhapsodies, and become very emaciated. So far, it must be confessed, the story is decidedly dull, and its pathos, notwithstanding the occasional grandeur and beauty of the imagery, often verges on the ridiculous. But, by way of relief, an element of life is generally introduced in the character of the Vidúshaka, or Jester, who is the constant companion of the hero; and in the young maidens, who are the confidential friends of the heroine, and soon become possessed of her secret. By a curious regulation, the Jester is always a Bráhman, and, therefore of a caste superior

to the king himself; yet his business is to excite mirth by being ridiculous in person, age, and attire. He is represented as grey-haired, hump-backed, lame, and hideously ugly. In fact, he is a species of buffoon, who is allowed full liberty of speech, being himself a universal butt. His attempts at wit, which are rarely very successful, and his allusions to the pleasures of the table, of which he is a confessed votary, are absurdly contrasted with the sententious solemnity of the despairing hero, crossed in the prosecution of his love-suit. His clumsy interference in the intrigues of his friend, only serves to augment his difficulties, and occasions many an awkward dilemma. On the other hand, the shrewdness of the heroine's confidantes never seems to fail them under the most trying circumstances; while their sly jokes and innuendos, their love of fun, their girlish sympathy with the progress of the love-affair, their warm affection for their friend, heighten the interest of the plot, and contribute not a little to vary its monotony.

Fortunately, in the 'Śakoontalá,' the story is diversified, and the interest well-sustained by a chain of stirring incidents. The first link of the chain, however, does not commence until the Fourth Act, when the union of the heroine with King Dushyanta, and her acceptance of the marriage-ring as a token of

recognition, are supposed to have taken place. Then follows the King's departure and temporary desertion of his bride; the curse pronounced on 'Śakoontalá' by the choleric Sage; the monarch's consequent loss of memory; the bride's journey to the palace of her husband; the mysterious disappearance of the marriage token; the public repudiation of Śakoontalá; her miraculous assumption to a celestial asylum; the unexpected discovery of the ring by a poor fisherman; the king's agony on recovering his recollection; his aerial voyage in the car of Indra; his strange meeting with the refractory child in the groves of Kaśyapa; the boy's battle with the young lion; the search for the amulet, by which the king is proved to be his father; the return of Śakoontalá, and the happy re-union of the lovers;—all these form a connected series of moving and interesting incidents. The feelings of the audience are wrought up to a pitch of great intensity; and whatever emotions of terror, grief, or pity, may have been excited, are properly tranquilized by the happy termination of the story. Indeed, if a calamitous conclusion be necessary to constitute a tragedy, the Hindú dramas are never tragedies. They are mixed compositions, in which joy and sorrow, happiness and misery, are woven in a mingled web,—tragicomic representations, in which good and evil, right

and wrong, truth and falsehood, are allowed to blend in confusion during the first acts of the drama. But, in the last act, harmony is always restored, order succeeds to disorder, tranquility to agitation; and the mind of the spectator, no longer perplexed by the apparent ascendancy of evil, is soothed, and purified, and made to acquiesce in the moral lesson deducible from the plot.

The play of 'Śakoontalá,' as Sir W. Jones observes, must have been very popular when it was first performed. The Indian empire was then in its palmy days, and the vanity of the natives would be highly flattered by the introduction of those kings and heroes who were supposed to have laid the foundation of its greatness and magnificence, and whose names were connected with all that was sacred and holy in their religion. Dushyanta, the hero of the drama, according to Indian legends, was one of the descendants of the Moon, or, in other words, belonged to the Lunar dynasty of Indian princes; and, if any dependance may be placed on Hindú chronology, he must have lived in the twenty-first or twenty-second generation after the flood. Puru, his most celebrated ancestor, was the sixth in descent from the Moon's son Budha, who married a daughter of the good king Satya-vrata, preserved by Vishṇu in the ark at the the time of the Deluge. The son of

Dushyanta, by Śakoontalá, was Bharata, from whom India is still called by the natives Bharata-varsha. After him came Samvaraṇa, Kuru, Sántanu, Bhíshma, and Vyása. The latter was the father of Dhṛitaráshṭra and Páṇḍu, the quarrels of whose sons form the subject of the great Sanskṛit epic poem called Mahábhárata, a poem with which the audience would be quite familiar, and in which they would feel the greatest pride.

The pedigree of Śakoontalá, the heroine of the drama, was no less interesting, and calculated to awaken the religious sympathies of Indian spectators. She was the daughter of the celebrated Viśwámitra, a name associated with many remarkable circumstances in Hindú mythology and history. His genealogy, and the principal events of his life, are narrated in the Rámáyaṇa, the first of the two epic poems, which were to the Hindús what the Iliad and the Odyssey wereto the Greeks. He was originally of the regal caste; and, having raised himself to the rank of a Bráhman by the length and rigour of his penance, he became the preceptor of Rámachandra, who was the hero of the Rámáyaṇa, and one of the incarnations of the god Vishṇu. With such antecedents, the audience could not fail to bring a sharpened appetite, and a self-satisfied frame of mind, to the performance of the play.

Although in the following translation it has been thought expedient to conform to modern usage, by indicating at the head of each Act the scene in which it is laid, yet it is proper to apprize the English reader that in scenery and scenic apparatus the Hindú drama must have been very defective. No directions as to changes of scene are given in the original text of the play. This is the more curious, as there are numerous stage-directions which prove that, in respect of dresses and decorations, the resources of the Indian theatre were sufficiently ample.

It is probable that a curtain suspended across the stage, and divided in the centre, answered all the purposes of scenes. Behind the curtain was the space or room called *nepathya*, where the decorations were kept, where the actors attired themselves, and remained in readiness before entering the stage, and whither they withdrew on leaving it. When an actor was to enter hurriedly, he was directed to do so 'with a toss of the curtain.'

The machinery and paraphernalia of the Indian theatre were also very limited, contrasting in this respect unfavourably with the ancient Greek theatre, which appears to have comprehended nearly all that modern ingenuity has devised. Nevertheless, seats, thrones, weapons, and chariots, were certainly intro-

duced, and as the intercourse between the inhabitants of heaven and earth was very frequent, it is not improbable that there may have been aërial contrivances to represent the chariots of celestial beings, as on the Greek stage. It is plain, however, from the frequent occurrence of the word *nátayitwá*, 'gesticulating,' 'acting,' that much had to be supplied by the imagination of the spectator, assisted by the gesticulations of the actors.

For further information relative to the dramatic system of the Hindús, the reader is referred to the notes appended to the present translation. It is hoped that they will be found to explain every allusion that might otherwise be unintelligible to the English reader.

M. W.

East-India College, Haileybury,
January, 1856.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

DUSHYANTA, *king of* INDIA.

MÁṬHAVYA, *the jester, friend and companion of the* KING.

KANWA, *chief of the hermits, foster-father of* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

ŚÁRNGARAVA, ŚÁRADWATA, } *two bráhmans, belonging to the hermitage of* KANWA.

MITRÁVASU, *brother-in-law of the* KING, *and superintendent of the city police.*

JÁNUKA *and* SÚCHAKA, *two constables.*

VÁTÁYANA, *the chamberlain or attendant on the women's apartments.*

SOMARÁTA, *the domestic priest.*

KARABHAKA, *a messenger of the queen-mother.*

RAIVATIKA, *the warder or doorkeeper.*

MÁTALI, *charioteer of* INDRA.

SARVA-DAMANA, *afterwards* BHARATA, *a little boy, son of* DUSHYANTA *by* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

KAŚYAPA, *a divine sage, progenitor of men and gods, son of* MARÍCHI, *and grandson of* BRAHMÁ.

Śakoontalá, *daughter of the sage* Viśwámitra *and the nymph* Menaká, *foster-child of the hermit* Kanwa.

Priyamvadá *and* Anasúyá, *female attendants, companions of* Śakoontalá.

Gautamí, *a holy matron, superior of the female inhabitants of the hermitage.*

Vasumatí, *the queen of* Dushyanta.

Sánumatí, *a nymph, friend of* Śakoontalá.

Taraliká, *personal attendant of the* King.

Chaturiká, *personal attendant of the* Queen.

Vetravatí, *female warder or door-keeper.*

Parabaritiká *and* Madhukariká, *maidens in charge of the royal gardens.*

Suvratá, *a nurse.*

Aditi, *wife of* Kaśyapa; *grand-daughter of* Brahmá, *through her father* Daksha.

Charioteer, Fisherman, Officers, and Hermits.

RULES FOR THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE PROPER NAMES.

Observe, that in order to secure the correct pronunciation of the title of this Drama, 'Śakuntalá' has been spelt 'Śakoontalá,' the *u* being pronounced like the *u* in the Engish word *rule*.

The vowel *a* must invariably be pronounced with a dull sound, like the *a* in *organ*, or the *u* in *fun*, *sun*. *Dushyanta* must therefore be pronounced as if written *Dooshyunta*. The long vowel *á* is pronounced like the *a* in *last*, *cart*; *i* like the *i* in *pin*, *sin*; *í* like the *i* in *marine*; *e* like the *e* in *prey*; *o* like the *o* in *so*; *ai* like the *ai* in *aisle*; *au* like *au* in the German word *baum*, or like the *ou* in *our*.

The consonants are generally pronounced as in English, but *g* has always the sound of *g* in *gun*, *give*, never of *g* in *gin*. S with the accent over it (ś), has the sound of *s* in *sure*, or of the last *s* in *session*.

ŚAKOONTALÁ;

OR,

THE LOST RING.

PROLOGUE.

BENEDICTION.

Íśa preserve you![1] he who is revealed
In these eight forms[2] by man perceptible—
Water, of all creation's works the first;
The fire that bears on high the sacrifice
Presented with solemnity to heaven;
The Priest, the holy offerer of gifts;
The Sun and Moon, those two majestic orbs,

Eternal marshallers of day and night;
The subtle Ether, vehicle of sound,
Diffused throughout the boundless universe;
The Earth, by sages called 'The place of birth
Of all material essences and things';
And Air, which giveth life to all that breathe.

STAGE-MANAGER.

[*After the recitation of the benediction.*]

[*Looking towards the tiring-room.*

Lady, when you have finished attiring yourself, come this way.

ACTRESS. [*Entering.*

Here I am, Sir; what are your commands?

STAGE-MANAGER.

We are here before the eyes of an audience of educated and discerning men;[3] and have to represent in their presence a new drama composed by Kálidása, called 'Śakoontalá, or, the Lost Ring.'[4] Let the whole company exert themselves to do justice to their several parts.

ACTRESS.

You, Sir, have so judiciously managed the cast of the characters, that nothing will be defective in the acting.

STAGE-MANAGER.

Lady, I will tell you the exact state of the case.

No skill in acting can I deem complete,
Till from the wise the actor gain applause:
Know that the heart e'en of the truly skilful,
Shrinks from too boastful confidence in self.

ACTRESS. [*Modestly.*

You judge correctly. And now, what are your commands?

STAGE-MANAGER.

What can you do better than engage the attention of the audience by some captivating melody?

ACTRESS.

Which among the seasons shall I select as the subject of my song?

STAGE-MANAGER.

You surely ought to give the preference to the present Summer season[5] that has but recently commenced, a season so rich in enjoyment. For now

Unceasing are the charms of halcyon days,
When the cool bath exhilarates the frame;

When sylvan gales are laden with the scent
Of fragrant Páṭalas;[6] when soothing sleep
Creeps softly on beneath the deepening shade;
And when, at last, the dulcet calm of eve
Entrancing steals o'er every yielding sense.

ACTRESS.

I will. [*Sings.*

Fond maids, the chosen of their hearts to please,
Intwine their ears with sweet Śirísha flowers,[7]
Whose fragrant lips attract the kiss of bees
That softly murmur through the summer hours.

STAGE-MANAGER.

Charmingly sung! The audience are motionless as statues, their souls rivoted by the enchanting strain. What subject shall we select for representation, that we may ensure a continuance of their favour?

ACTRESS.

Why not the same, Sir, announced by you at first? Let the drama called 'Śakoontalá, or the Lost Ring,' be the subject of our dramatic performance.

STAGE-MANAGER.

Rightly reminded! For the moment I had forgotten it.
Your song's transporting melody decoyed
My thoughts, and rapt with ecstasy my soul;
As now the bounding antelope allures
The King Dushyanta[8] on the chase intent.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT I.

SCENE—*A Forest.*

Enter King DUSHYANTA, *armed with a bow and arrow, in a chariot, chasing an antelope, attended by his* CHARIOTEER.

CHARIOTEER.

[*Looking at the deer, and then at the* KING.

Great Prince,

When on the antelope I bend my gaze,
And on your Majesty, whose mighty bow
Has its string firmly braced; before my eyes
The god that wields the trident[9] seems revealed,
Chasing the deer that flies from him in vain.

KING.

Charioteer, this fleet antelope has drawn us far from my attendants. See! there he runs:

Aye and anon his graceful neck he bends
To cast a glance at the pursuing car;
And dreading now the swift-descending shaft,
Contracts into itself his slender frame:
About his path, in scattered fragments strewn,
The half-chewed grass falls from his panting mouth;

See! in his airy bounds he seems to fly,
And leaves no trace upon th' elastic turf.

[*With astonishment.*

How now! swift as is our pursuit, I scarce can see him.

CHARIOTEER.

Sire, the ground here is full of hollows; I have therefore drawn in the reins and checked the speed of the chariot. Hence the deer has somewhat gained upon us. Now that we are passing over level ground, we shall have no difficulty in overtaking him.

KING.

Loosen the reins, then.

CHARIOTEER.

The King is obeyed. [*Drives the chariot at full speed.*] Great Prince, see! see!

Responsive to the slackened rein, the steeds
Chafing with eager rivalry, career
With emulative fleetness o'er the plain;
Their necks outstretched, their waving plumes, that late
Fluttered above their brows, are motionless;[10]
Their sprightly ears, but now erect, bent low;
Themselves unsullied by the circling dust,
That vainly follows on their rapid course.

KING. [*Joyously.*

In good sooth, the horses seem as if they would outstrip the steeds of Indra and the Sun.[11]

That which but now shewed to my view minute
Quickly assumes dimension; that which seemed
A moment since disjoined in diverse parts,
Looks suddenly like one compacted whole;
That which is really crooked in its shape
In the far distance left, grows regular;
Wondrous the chariot's speed, that in a breath,
Makes the near distant and the distant near.

Now, Charioteer, see me kill the deer. [*Takes aim.*

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

Hold, O King! this deer belongs to our hermitage. Kill it not! kill it not!

CHARIOTEER. [*Listening and looking.*

Great King, some hermits have stationed themselves so as to screen the antelope at the very moment of its coming within range of your arrow.

KING. [*Hastily.*

Then stop the horses.

CHARIOTEER.

I obey. [*Stops the chariot.*

Enter a HERMIT, *and two others with him.*

HERMIT. [*Raising his hand.*

This deer, O King, belongs to our hermitage. Kill it not! kill it not!

Now heaven forbid this barbëd shaft descend
Upon the fragile body of a fawn,
Like fire upon a heap of tender flowers!
Can thy steel bolts no meeter quarry find
Than the warm life-blood of a harmless deer?
Restore, great Prince, thy weapon to its quiver
More it becomes thy arms to shield the weak,
Than to bring anguish on the innocent.

KING.

'Tis done. [*Replaces the arrow in its quiver.*

HERMIT.

Worthy is this action of a Prince, the light of Puru's race.[12]

Well does this act befit a Prince like thee,
Right worthy is it of thine ancestry.
Thy guerdon be a son of peerless worth,
Whose wide dominion shall embrace the earth.

BOTH THE OTHER HERMITS.

[*Raising their hands.*

May heaven indeed grant thee a son, a sovereign of the earth from sea to sea!

KING. [*Bowing.*

I accept with gratitude a Bráhman's benediction.

HERMIT.

We came hither, mighty Prince, to collect sacrificial wood. Here on the banks of the Máliní you may perceive the hermitage of the great sage Kanwa.[13] If other duties require not your presence, deign to enter and accept our hospitality.

When you behold our penitential rites
Performed without impediment by Saints,
Rich only in devotion, then with pride
Will you reflect, Such are the holy men
Who call me Guardian; such the men for whom
To wield the bow I bare my nervous arm,
Scarred by the motion of the glancing string.

KING.

Is the Chief of your Society now at home?

HERMIT.

No; he has gone to Soma-tírtha[14] to propitiate Destiny,

which threatens his daughter Śakoontalá with some calamity; but he has commissioned her in his absence to entertain all guests with hospitality.

KING.

Good! I will pay her a visit. She will make me acquainted with the mighty sage's acts of penance and devotion.

HERMIT.

And we will depart on our errand.

[*Exit with his companions.*

KING.

Charioteer, urge on the horses. We will at least purify our souls by a sight of this hallowed retreat.

CHARIOTEER.

Your Majesty is obeyed.

[*Drives the chariot with great velocity.*

KING. [*Looking all about him.*

Charioteer, even without being told, I should have known that these were the precincts of a grove consecrated to penitential rites.

CHARIOTEER.

How so?

KING.

Do not you observe?

Beneath the trees, whose hollow trunks afford
Secure retreat to many a nestling brood

Of parrots, scattered grains of rice lie strewn.
Lo! here and there are seen the polished slabs
That serve to bruise the fruit of Ingudí.[15]
The gentle roe-deer, taught to trust in man,
Unstartled hear our voices. On the paths
Appear the traces of bark-woven vests[16]
Borne dripping from the limpid found of waters.

And mark!

Laved are the roots of trees by deep canals,[17]
Whose glassy waters tremble in the breeze;
The sprouting verdure of the leaves is dimmed
By dusky wreaths of upward curling smoke
From burnt oblations; and on new-mown lawns
Around our car graze leisurely the fawns.

CHARIOTEER.

I observe it all.

KING. [*Advancing a little further.*

The inhabitants of this sacred retreat must not be disturbed. Stay the chariot, that I may alight.

CHARIOTEER.

The reins are held in. Your Majesty may descend.

KING. [*Alighting.*

Charioteer, groves devoted to penance must be entered in humble attire. Take these ornaments. [*Delivers his ornaments and bow to the* CHARIOTEER.] Charioteer, see that the horses are watered, and attend to them until I return from visiting the inhabitants of the hermitage.

CHARIOTEER.

I will. [*Exit.*

KING. [*Walking and looking about.*

Here is the entrance to the hermitage. I will now go in.

[*Entering and feeling a throbbing sensation in his arm.*

Serenest peace is in this calm retreat,
By passion's breath unruffled; what portends
My throbbing arm? [18] Why should it whisper here
Of happy love? Yet everywhere around us
Stand the closed portals of events unknown.

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

This way, my dear companions; this way.

KING. [*Listening.*

Hark! I hear voices to the right of yonder grove of trees. I will walk in that direction. [*Walking and looking about.*] Ah! here are the maidens of the hermitage coming this way to

water the shrubs, carrying watering-pots proportioned to their strength. [*Gazing at them.*] How graceful they look!

In palaces such charms are rarely ours;
The woodland plants outshine the garden flowers.

I will conceal myself in this shade and watch them.

[*Stands gazing at them.*

Enter ŚAKOONTALÁ, *with her two female companions, employed in the manner described.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

This way, my dear companions; this way.

ANASÚYÁ.

Dear Śakoontalá, one would think that father Kanwa had more affection for the shrubs of the hermitage even than for you, seeing he assigns to you who are yourself as delicate as the fresh-blown jasmine, the task of filling with water the trenches which encircle their roots.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Dear Anasúyá, although I am charged by my good father with this duty, yet I cannot regard it as a task. I really feel a sisterly love for these plants. [*Continues watering the shrubs.*

KING.

Can this be the daughter of Kanwa? The saintly man, though descended from the great Kaśyapa, must be very deficient in judgment to habituate such a maiden to the life of a recluse.

The sage who would this form of artless grace
Inure to penance,—thoughtlessly attempts
To cleave in twain the hard acacia's stem [19]
With the soft edge of a blue lotus-leaf.

Well! concealed behind this tree, I will watch her without raising her suspicions. [*Conceals himself.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Good Anasúyá, Priyamvadá has drawn this bark-dress too tightly about my chest. I pray thee, loosen it a little.

ANASÚYÁ.

I will. [*Loosens it.*]

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Smiling.*

Why do you lay the blame on me? Blame rather your own blooming youthfulness which imparts fulness to your bosom.

KING.

A most just observation!

This youthful form, whose bosom's swelling charms
By the bark's knotted tissue are concealed,

Like some fair bud close folded in its sheath,
Gives not to view the blooming of its beauty.

But what am I saying? In real truth, this bark-dress, though ill-suited to her figure, sets it off like an ornament.

The lotus[20] with the Śaivala[21] entwined
Is not a whit less brilliant: dusky spots
Heighten the lustre of the cold-rayed moon:
This lovely maiden in her dress of bark
Seems all the lovelier. E'en the meanest garb
Gives to true beauty fresh attractiveness.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Looking before her.*

Yon Keśara-tree[22] beckons to me with its young shoots, which, as the breeze waves them to and fro, appear like slender fingers. I will go and attend to it.

[*Walks towards it.*

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Dear Śakoontalá, prithee, rest in that attitude one moment.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Why so?

PRIYAMVADÁ.

The Keśara-tree, whilst your graceful form bends about its stem, appears as if it were wedded to some lovely twining creeper.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Ah! saucy girl, you are most appropriately named Priyamvadá ('Speaker of flattering things').

KING.

What Priyamvadá says, though complimentary, is nevertheless true. Verily,

Her ruddy lip vies with the opening bud;
Her graceful arms are as the twining stalks;
And her whole form is radiant with the glow
Of youthful beauty, as the tree with bloom.

ANASÚYÁ.

See, dear Śakoontalá, here is the young jasmine, which you named 'the Moonlight of the Grove,' the self-elected wife of the mango-tree. Have you forgotten it?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Rather will I forget myself. [*Approaching the plant and looking at it.*] How delightful is the season when the jasmine-creeper and the mango-tree seem thus to unite in mutual embraces! The fresh blossoms of the jasmine resemble the bloom of a young bride, and the newly-formed shoots of the mango appear to make it her natural protector. [*Continues gazing at it.*

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Smiling.*

Do you know, my Anasúyá, why Śakoontalá gazes so intently at the jasmine?

ANASÚYÁ.

No, indeed, I cannot imagine. I pray thee tell me.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

She is wishing that as the jasmine is united to a suitable tree, so, in like manner, she may obtain a husband worthy of her.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Speak for yourself, girl; this is the thought in your own mind. [*Continues watering the flowers.*

KING.

Would that my union with her were permissible![23] and yet I hardly dare hope that the maiden is sprung from a caste different from that of the Head of the hermitage. But away with doubt:

That she is free to wed a warrior-king
My heart attests. For, in conflicting doubts,
The secret promptings of the good man's soul
Are an unerring index of the truth.

However, come what may, I will ascertain the fact.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*In a flurry.*

Ah! a bee, disturbed by the sprinkling of the water, has left the young jasmine, and is trying to settle on my face.

[*Attempts to drive it away.*

KING. [*Gazing at her ardently.*

Beautiful! there is something charming even in her repulse.

Where'er the bee his eager onset plies,
Now here, now there, she darts her kindling eyes:
What love hath yet to teach, fear teaches now,
The furtive glances and the frowning brow.

[*In a tone of envy.*

Ah happy bee! how boldly dost thou try
To steal the lustre from her sparkling eye;
And in thy circling movements hover near,
To murmur tender secrets in her ear;
Or, as she coyly waves her hand, to sip
Voluptuous nectar from her lower lip!
While rising doubts my heart's fond hopes destroy,
Thou dost the fulness of her charms enjoy.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

This impertinent bee will not rest quiet. I must move elsewhere. [*Moving a few steps off, and casting a glance around.*]

How now! he is following me here. Help! my dear friends, help! deliver me from the attacks of this troublesome insect.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

How can we deliver you? Call Dushyanta to your aid. The sacred groves are under the king's special protection.

KING.

An excellent opportunity for me to show myself. Fear not—[*Checks himself when the words are half-uttered. Aside.*] But stay, if I introduce myself in this manner, they will know me to be the King. Be it so, I will accost them, nevertheless.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Moving a step or two further off.*

What! it still persists in following me.

KING. [*Advancing hastily.*

When mighty Puru's offspring sways the earth,
And o'er the wayward holds his threatening rod,
Who dares molest the gentle maids that keep
Their holy vigils here in Kanwa's grove?

[*All look at the* KING, *and are embarrassed.*

ANASÚYÁ.

Kind sir, no outrage has been committed; only our dear friend here was teased by the attacks of a troublesome bee.

[*Points to* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

KING.

[*Turning to* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

I trust all is well with your devotional rites? [24]

[ŚAKOONTALÁ *stands confused and silent.*

ANASÚYÁ.

All is well, indeed, now that we are honoured by the reception of a distinguished guest. Dear Śakoontalá, go, bring from the hermitage an offering of flowers, rice, and fruit. This water that we have brought with us will serve to bathe our guest's feet. [25]

KING.

The rites of hospitality are already performed; your truly kind words are the best offering I can receive.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

At least be good enough, gentle Sir, to sit down awhile, and rest yourself on this seat shaded by the leaves of the Sapta-parṇa tree. [26]

KING.

You, too, must all be fatigued by your employment.

ANASÚYÁ.

Dear Śakoontalá, there is no impropriety in our sitting by the side of our guest: come, let us sit down here.

[*All sit down together.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

How is it that the sight of this man has made me sensible of emotions inconsistent with religious vows?

KING.

[*Gazing at them all by turns.*

How charmingly your friendship is in keeping with the equality of your ages and appearance!

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Aside to* ANASÚYA.

Who can this person be, whose lively yet dignified manner, and polite conversation, bespeak him a man of high rank?

ANASÚYÁ.

I, too, my dear, am very curious to know. I will ask him myself. [*Aloud.*] Your kind words, noble Sir, fill me with confidence, and prompt me to inquire of what regal family

our noble guest is the ornament? what country is now mourning his absence? and what induced a person so delicately nurtured to expose himself to the fatigue of visiting this grove of penance?

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

Be not troubled, O my heart, Anasúyá is giving utterance to thy thoughts.

KING. [*Aside.*

How now shall I reply? shall I make myself known, or shall I still disguise my real rank? I have it; I will answer her thus. [*Aloud.*] I am the person charged by his majesty, the descendant of Puru, with the administration of justice and religion; and am come to this sacred grove to satisfy myself that the rites of the hermits are free from obstruction.

ANASÚYÁ.

The hermits, then, and all the members of our religious society have now a guardian.

[ŚAKOONTALÁ *gazes bashfully at the* KING.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

[*Perceiving the state of her feelings, and of the* KING'S. *Aside to* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Dear Śakoontalá, if father Kanwa were but at home to-day—

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Angrily.*

What if he were?

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

He would honour this our distinguished guest with an offering of the most precious of his possessions.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Go to! you have some silly idea in your minds. I will not listen to such remarks.

KING.

May I be allowed, in my turn, to ask you maidens a few particulars respecting your friend?

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

Your request, Sir, is an honour.

KING.

The sage Kanwa lives in the constant practice of austerities. How then, can this friend of yours be called his daughter?

ANASÚYÁ.

I will explain to you, Sir. You have heard of an illustrious sage of regal caste, Viśwámitra, whose family name is Kaúsika.[27]

KING.

I have.

ANASÚYÁ.

Know that he is the real father of our friend. The venerable Kanwa is only her reputed father. He it was who brought her up, when she was deserted by her mother.

KING.

'Deserted by her mother!' My curiosity is excited; pray let me hear the story from the beginning.

ANASÚYÁ.

You shall hear it, Sir. Some time since, this sage of regal caste, while performing a most severe penance on the banks of the river Godávarí, excited the jealousy and alarm of the gods; insomuch that they despatched a lovely nymph named Menaká to interrupt his devotions.

KING.

The inferior gods, I am aware, are jealous[26] of the power which the practice of excessive devotion confers on mortals.

ANASÚYÁ.

Well then, it happened that Viśwámitra, gazing on the bewitching beauty of that nymph at a season when, spring being in its glory—— [*Stops short, and appears confused.*

KING.

The rest may be easily divined. Śakoontalá, then, is the offspring of the nymph.

ANASÚYÁ.

Just so.

KING.

It is quite intelligible.

How could a mortal to such charms give birth?
The lightning's radiance flashes not from earth.

[ŚAKOONTALÁ *remains modestly seated with downcast eyes.*

[*Aside.*] And so my desire has really scope for its indulgence. Yet I am still distracted by doubts, remembering the pleasantry of her female companions respecting her wish for a husband.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

[*Looking with a smile at* ŚAKOONTALÁ, *and then turning towards the* KING.

You seem desirous, Sir, of asking something further.

[ŚAKOONTALÁ *makes a chiding gesture with her finger.*

KING.

You conjecture truly. I am so eager to hear the particulars of your friend's history, that I have still another question to ask.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Scruple not to do so. Persons who lead the life of hermits may be questioned unreservedly.

KING.

I wish to ascertain one point respecting your friend.

Will she be bound by solitary vows
Opposed to love, till her espousals only?
Or ever dwell with these her cherished fawns,
Whose eyes, in lustre vying with her own,
Return her gaze of sisterly affection?

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Hitherto, Sir, she has been engaged in the practice of religious duties, and has lived in subjection to her foster-father; but it is now his fixed intention to give her away in marriage to a husband worthy of her.

KING. [*Aside.*

His intention may be easily carried into effect.

Be hopeful, O my heart, thy harrowing doubts
Are past and gone; that which thou didst believe
To be as unapproachable as fire,
Is found a glittering gem that may be touched.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Pretending anger.*

Anasúyá, I shall leave you.

ANASÚYÁ.

Why so?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

That I may go and report this impertinent Priyamvadá to the venerable matron, Gautamí.[29]

ANASÚYÁ.

Surely, dear friend, it would not be right to leave a distinguished guest before he has received the rites of hospitality, and quit his presence in this wilful manner.

[ŚAKOONTALÁ, *without answering a word, moves away.*

KING.

[*Making a movement to arrest her departure, but checking himself. Aside.*

Ah! a lover's feelings betray themselves by his gestures.

When I would fain have stayed the maid, a sense
Of due decorum checked my bold design:
Though I have stirred not, yet my mien betrays
My eagerness to follow on her steps.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

[*Holding* ŚAKOONTALÁ *back.*

Dear Śakoontalá, it does not become you to go away in this manner.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Frowning.*

Why not, pray?

PRIYAMVADÁ.

You are under a promise to water two more shrubs for me. When you have paid your debt, you shall go, and not before. [*Forces her to turn back.*

KING.

Spare her this trouble, gentle maiden. The exertion of watering the shrubs has already fatigued her.

The water-jar has overtasked the strength
Of her slim arms; her shoulders droop, her hands
Are ruddy with the glow of quickened pulses;
E'en now her agitated breath imparts
Unwonted tremor to her heaving breast;
The pearly drops that mar the recent bloom
Of the Śirísha pendent in her ear,
Gather in clustering circles on her cheek;
Loosed is the fillet of her hair: her hand
Restrains the locks that struggle to be free.

Suffer me, then, thus to discharge the debt for you.

[*Offers a ring to* PRIYAMVADÁ. *Both the maidens, reading the name* DUSHYANTA *on the seal, look at each other with surprise.*

KING.

Nay, think not that I am King Dushyanta. I am only the king's officer, and this is the ring which I have received from him as my credentials.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

The greater the reason you ought not to part with the ring from your finger. I am content to release her from her obligation at your simple request. [*With a smile.*] Now, Śakoontalá my love, you are at liberty to retire, thanks to the intercession of this noble stranger, or rather of this mighty prince.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

My movements are no longer under my own control. [*Aloud.*] Pray, what authority have you over me, either to send me away or keep me back?

KING.

[*Gazing at* ŚAKOONTALÁ. *Aside.*

Would I could ascertain whether she is affected towards me as I am towards her! At any rate, my hopes are free to indulge themselves. Because,

Although she mingles not her words with mine,
Yet doth her listening ear drink in my speech;

Although her eye shrinks from my ardent gaze,
No form but mine attracts its timid glances.

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

O hermits, be ready to protect the animals belonging to our hermitage. King Dushyanta, amusing himself with hunting, is near at hand.

Lo! by the feet of prancing horses raised,
Thick clouds of moving dust, like glittering swarms
Of locusts in the glow of eventide,
Fall on the branches of our sacred trees;
Where hang the dripping vests of woven bark,
Bleached by the waters of the cleansing fountain.

And see!

Scared by the royal chariot in its course,
With headlong haste an elephant invades
The hallowed precincts of our sacred grove;
Himself the terror of the startled deer,
And an embodied hindrance to our rites.
The hedge of creepers clinging to his feet,
Feeble obstruction to his mad career,
Is dragged behind him in a tangled chain;

And with terrific shock one tusk he drives
Into the riven body of a tree,
Sweeping before him all impediments.

KING. [*Aside.*

Out upon it! my retinue are looking for me, and are disturbing this holy retreat. Well! there is no help for it; I must go and meet them.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

Noble Sir, we are terrified by the accidental disturbance caused by the wild elephant. Permit us to return into the cottage.

KING. [*Hastily.*

Go, gentle maidens. It shall be our care that no injury happen to the hermitage. [*All rise up.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

After such poor hospitality we are ashamed to request the honour of a second visit from you.

KING.

Say not so. The mere sight of you, sweet maidens, has been to me the best entertainment.

SAKOONTALA.

Anasúyá, a pointed blade of Kuśa-grass[30] has pricked my foot; and my bark-mantle is caught in the branch of a Kuruvaka-bush.[31] Be so good as to wait for me until I have disentangled it.

[*Exit with her two companions, after making pretexts for delay, that she may steal glances at the* KING.

KING.

I have no longer any desire to return to the city. I will therefore rejoin my attendants, and make them encamp somewhere in the vicinity of this sacred grove. In good truth, Śakoontalá has taken such possession of my thoughts, that I cannot turn myself in any other direction.

My limbs drawn onward leave my heart behind,
Like silken pennon borne against the wind.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*A plain on the skirts of the forest.*

Enter the Jester[32] MÁTHAVYA, *in a melancholy mood.*

MÁTHAVYA. [*Sighing.*

Heigh-ho! what an unlucky fellow I am! worn to a shadow by my royal friend's sporting propensities. 'Here's a deer!' 'There goes a boar!' 'Yonder's a tiger!' This is the only burden of our talk, while in the heat of the meridian sun we toil on from jungle to jungle, wandering about in the paths of the woods, where the trees afford us no shelter. Are we thirsty? We have nothing to drink but the foul water of some mountain stream, filled with dry leaves which give it a most pungent flavour. Are we hungry? We have nothing to eat but roast game,[33] which we must swallow down at odd times, as best we can. Even at night there is no peace to be had. Sleeping is out of the question, with joints all strained by dancing attendance upon my sporting friend; or if I do happen to doze, I am awakened at the very earliest dawn by

the horrible din of a lot of rascally beaters and huntsmen, who must needs surround the wood before sunrise, and deafen me with their clatter. Nor are these my only troubles. Here's a fresh grievance, like a new boil rising upon an old one! Yesterday, while we were lagging behind, my royal friend entered yonder hermitage after a deer; and there, as ill-luck would have it, caught sight of a beautiful girl, called Śakoontalá, the hermit's daughter. From that moment, not another thought about returning to the city! and all last night, not a wink of sleep did he get for thinking of the damsel. What is to be done? At any rate I will be on the watch for him as soon as he has finished his toilet. [*Walking and looking about.*] Oh! here he comes, attended by the Yavana women[31] with bows in their hands, and wearing garlands of wild flowers. What shall I do? I have it. I will pretend to stand in the easiest attitude for resting my bruised and crippled limbs. [*Stands leaning on a staff.*

Enter King DUSHYANTA, *followed by a retinue in the manner described.*

KING.

True, by no easy conquest may I win her,
Yet are my hopes encouraged by her mien.

Love is not yet triumphant; but, methinks,
The hearts of both are ripe for his delights.

[*Smiling.*] Ah! thus does the lover delude himself; judging of the state of his loved one's feelings by his own desires. But yet,

The stolen glance with half-averted eye,
The hesitating gait, the quick rebuke
Addressed to her companion, who would fain
Have stayed her counterfeit departure; these
Are signs not unpropitious to my suit.
So eagerly the lover feeds his hopes,
Claiming each trivial gesture for his own.

MÁTHAVYA.

[*Still in the same attitude.*

Ah, friend, my hands cannot move to greet you with the usual salutation. I can only just command my lips to wish your majesty victory.

KING.

Why, what has paralysed your limbs?

MÁTHAVYA.

You might as well ask me how my eye comes to water after you have poked your finger into it.

KING.

I don't understand you; speak more intelligibly.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Ah, my dear friend, is yonder upright reed transformed into a crooked plant by its own act, or by the force of the current?

KING.

The current of the river causes it, I suppose.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Aye; just as you are the cause of my crippled limbs.

KING.

How so?

MÁṬHAVYA.

Here are you living the life of a wild man of the woods in a savage unfrequented region, while your state affairs are left to shift for themselves; and as for poor me, I am no longer master of my own limbs, but have to follow you about day after day in your chases after wild animals, till my bones are all crippled and out of joint. Do, my dear friend, let me have one day's rest.

KING. [*Aside.*

This fellow little knows, while he talks in this manner, that

my mind is wholly engrossed by recollections of the hermit's daughter, and quite as disinclined to the chase as his own.

No longer can I bend my well-braced bow
Against the timid deer; nor e'er again
With well-aimed arrows can I think to harm
These her beloved associates, who enjoy
The privilege of her companionship;
Teaching her tender glances in return.

MÁṬHAVYA.

[*Looking in the* KING'S *face.*

I may as well speak to the winds, for any attention you pay to my requests. I suppose you have something on your mind, and are talking it over to yourself.

KING. [*Smiling.*

I was only thinking that I ought not to disregard a friend's request.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Then may the King live for ever! [*Moves off.*

KING.

Stay a moment, my dear friend. I have something else to say to you.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Say on, then.

KING.

When you have rested, you must assist me in another business, which will give you no fatigue.

MÁṬHAVYA.

In eating something nice, I hope.

KING.

You shall know at some future time.

MÁṬHAVYA.

No time better than the present.

KING.

What ho! there.

WARDER. [*Entering.*

What are your Majesty's commands?

KING.

O Raivatika! bid the General of the forces attend.

WARDER.

I will, Sire. [*Exit and re-enters with the* GENERAL.] Come forward, General; his Majesty is looking towards you, and has some order to give you.

GENERAL. [*Looking at the* KING.

Though hunting is known to produce ill effects, my royal master has derived only benefit from it. For

Like the majestic elephant that roams
O'er mountain wilds, so does the King display
A stalwart frame, instinct with vigorous life.
His brawny arms and manly chest are scored
By frequent passage of the sounding string;
Unharmed he bears the mid-day sun; no toil
His mighty spirit daunts; his sturdy limbs,
Stripped of redundant flesh, relinquish nought
Of their robust proportions, but appear
In muscle, nerve, and sinewy fibre cased.

[*Approaching the* KING.] Victory to the King! We have tracked the wild beasts to their lairs in the forest. Why delay, when everything is ready?

KING.

My friend Máṭhavya here has been disparaging the chase, till he has taken away all my relish for it.

GENERAL. [*Aside to* MÁTHAVYA.

Persevere in your opposition, my good fellow: I will sound the King's real feelings, and humour him accordingly. [*Aloud.*]

The blockhead talks nonsense, and your Majesty, in your own person furnishes the best proof of it. Observe, sire, the advantage and pleasure the hunter derives from the chase.

Freed from all grosser influences, his frame
Loses its sluggish humours, and becomes
Buoyant, compact, and fit for bold encounter.
'Tis his to mark with joy the varied passions,
Fierce heats of anger, terror, blank dismay,
Of forest animals that cross his path.
Then what a thrill transports the hunter's soul,
When, with unerring course, his driven shaft
Pierces the moving mark! Oh! 'tis conceit
In moralists to call the chase a vice;
What recreation can compare with this?

MÁṬHAVYA. [*Angrily.*

Away! tempter, away! The King has recovered his senses, and is himself again. As for you, you may, if you choose, wander about from forest to forest, till some old bear seizes you by the nose, and makes a mouthful of you.

KING.

My good General, as we are just now in the neighbourhood

of a consecrated grove, your panegyric upon hunting is somewhat ill-timed, and I cannot assent to all you have said. For the present,

All undisturbed the buffaloes shall sport
In yonder pool, and with their ponderous horns
Scatter its tranquil waters, while the deer,
Couched here and there in groups beneath the shade
Of spreading branches, ruminate in peace.
And all securely shall the herd of boars
Feed on the marshy sedge; and thou, my bow,
With slackened string enjoy a long repose.

GENERAL.

So please your Majesty, it shall be as you desire.

KING.

Recal, then, the beaters who were sent in advance to surround the forest. My troops must not be allowed to disturb this sacred retreat, and irritate its pious inhabitants.

Know that within the calm and cold recluse
Lurks unperceived a germ of smothered flame,
All-potent to destroy; a latent fire
That rashly kindled bursts wit fury forth:

As in the disc of crystal[35] that remains
Cool to the touch, until the solar ray
Fall on its polished surface, and excite
The burning heat that lies within concealed.

GENERAL.

Your Majesty's commands shall be obeyed.

MÁTHAVYA.

Off with you, you son of a slave! Your nonsense won't go down here, my fine fellow. [*Exit* GENERAL.

KING.

[*Looking at his attendants.*

Here, women, take my hunting-dress; and you, Raivataka, keep guard carefully outside.

ATTENDANTS.

We will, sire. [*Exeunt.*

MÁTHAVYA.

Now that you have got rid of these plagues, who have been buzzing about us like so many flies, sit down, do, on that stone slab, with the shade of the tree as your canopy, and I will seat myself by you quite comfortably.

KING.

Go you, and sit down first.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Come along, then.

[*Both walk on a little way, and seat themselves.*

KING.

Máṭhavya, it may be said of you that you have never beheld anything worth seeing: for your eyes have not yet looked upon the loveliest object in creation.

MÁṬHAVYA.

How can you say so, when I see your Majesty before me at this moment?

KING.

It is very natural that every one should consider his own friend perfect; but I was alluding to Śakoontalá, the brightest ornament of these hallowed groves.

MÁṬHAVYA. [*Aside.*

I understand well enough, but I am not going to humour him. [*Aloud.*] If, as you intimate, she is a hermit's daughter, you cannot lawfully ask her in marriage. You may as well, then, dismiss her from your mind, for any good the mere sight of her can do.

KING.

Think you that a descendant of the mighty Puru could fix his affections on an unlawful object?

Though, as men say, the offspring of the sage,
The maiden to a nymph celestial owes
Her being, and by her mother left on earth,
Was found and nurtured by the holy man
As his own daughter, in this hermitage;—
So, when dissevered from its parent stalk,
Some falling blossom of the jasmine[36] wafted
Upon the sturdy sun-flower, is preserved
By its support from premature decay.

MÁṬHAVYA. [*Smiling.*

This passion of yours for a rustic maiden, when you have so many gems of women at home in your palace, seems to me very like the fancy of a man who is tired of sweet dates, and longs for sour tamarinds as a variety.

KING.

You have not seen her, or you would not talk in this fashion.

MÁṬHAVYA.

I can quite understand it must require something

She did look towards me, though she quick withdrew
Her stealthy glances when she met my gaze;
She smiled upon me sweetly, but disguised
With maiden grace the secret of her smiles.
Coy love was half unveiled; then, sudden checked
By modesty, left half to be divined.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Why, of course, my dear friend, you never could seriously expect that at the very first sight she would fall over head and ears in love with you, and without more ado come and sit in your lap.

KING.

When we parted from each other, she betrayed her liking for me by clearer indications, but still with the utmost modesty.

Scarce had the fair one from my presence passed,
When, suddenly, without apparent cause,
She stopped, and counterfeiting pain, exclaimed,
'My foot is wounded by this prickly grass.'
Then glancing at me tenderly, she feigned
Another charming pretext for delay,

Pretending that a bush had caught her robe
And turned as if to disentangle it.

MÁṬHAVYA.

I trust you have laid in a good stock of provisions, for I see you intend making this consecrated grove your game-preserve, and will be roaming here in quest of sport for some time to come.

KING.

You must know, my good fellow, that I have been recognised by some of the inmates of the hermitage. Now I want the assistance of your fertile invention, in devising some excuse for going there again.

MÁṬHAVYA.

There is but one expedient that I can suggest. You are the King, are you not?

KING.

What then?

MÁṬHAVYA.

Say you have come for the sixth part of their grain,[38] which they owe you for tribute.

KING.

No, no, foolish man; these hermits pay me a very different

kind of tribute, which I value more than heaps of gold or jewels; observe,

The tribute which my other subjects bring
Must moulder into dust, but holy men
Present me with a portion of the fruits
Of penitential services and prayers—
A precious and imperishable gift.

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

We are fortunate; here is the object of our search.

KING. [*Listening.*

Surely those must be the voices of hermits, to judge by their deep tones.

WARDER. [*Entering.*

Victory to the King! two young hermits are in waiting outside, and solicit an audience of your Majesty.

KING.

Introduce them immediately.

WARDER.

I will, my liege. [*Goes out, and re-enters with* TWO YOUNG HERMITS.] This way, Sirs, this way.

[*Both the* HERMITS *look at the* KING.

FIRST HERMIT.

How majestic is his mien, and yet what confidence it inspires! But this might be expected in a king, whose character and habits have earned for him a title only one degree removed from that of a Saint.[39]

In this secluded grove, whose sacred joys
All may participate, he deigns to dwell
Like one of us; and daily treasures up
A store of purest merit for himself,
By the protection of our holy rites.
In his own person wondrously are joined
Both majesty and saintlike holiness:
And often chanted by inspirëd bards,[40]
His hallowed title of 'Imperial Sage'
Ascends in joyous accents to the skies.

SECOND HERMIT.

Bear in mind, Gautama, that this is the great Dushyanta, the friend of Indra.

FIRST HERMIT.

What of that?

SECOND HERMIT.

Where is the wonder if his nervous arm,
Puissant and massive as the iron bar

That binds a castle-gateway, singly sways
The sceptre of the universal earth,
E'en to its dark-green boundary of waters?
Or if the gods, beholden to his aid
In their fierce warfare with the powers of hell,[11]
Should blend his name with Indra's in their songs
Of victory, and gratefully accord
No lower meed of praise to his braced bow,
Than to the thunders of the god of heaven?

BOTH THE HERMITS. [*Approaching.*

Victory to the King!

KING. [*Rising from his seat.*

Hail to you both!

BOTH THE HERMITS.

Heaven bless your majesty! [*They offer fruits*

KING.

[*Respectfully receiving the offering.*

Tell me, I pray you, the object of your visit.

BOTH THE HERMITS.

The inhabitants of the hermitage having heard of your Majesty's sojourn in our neighbourhood, make this humble petition.

KING.

What are their commands?

BOTH THE HERMITS.

In the absence of our Superior, the great Sage Kanwa, evil demons are disturbing our sacrificial rites.[42] Deign, therefore, accompanied by your charioteer, to take up your abode in our hermitage for a few days.

KING.

I am honoured by your invitation.

MÁṬHAVYA. [*Aside.*

Most opportune and convenient, certainly!

KING. [*Smiling.*

Ho! there, Raivataka! Tell the charioteer from me to bring round the chariot with my bow.

WARDER.

I will, Sire. [*Exit.*

BOTH THE HERMITS. [*Joyfully.*

Well it becomes the King by acts of grace
To emulate the virtues of his race.
Such acts thy lofty destiny attest;
Thy mission is to succour the distressed.

KING. [*Bowing to the* HERMITS.

Go first, reverend Sirs, I will follow you immediately.

BOTH THE HERMITS.

May victory attend you! [*Exeunt.*

KING.

My dear Máṭhavya, are you not full of longing to see Śakoontalá?

MÁTHAVYA.

To tell you the truth, though I was just now brim-full of desire to see her, I have not a drop left since this piece of news about the demons.

KING.

Never fear; you shall keep close to me for protection.

MÁTHAVYA.

Well, you must be my guardian-angel, and act the part of a very Vishnu [43] to me.

WARDER. [*Entering.*

Sire, the chariot is ready, and only waits to conduct you to victory. But here is a messenger named Karabhaka, just

arrived from your capital, with a message from the Queen, your mother.

KING [*Respectfully.*

How say you? a messenger from the venerable Queen?

WARDER.

Even so.

KING.

Introduce him at once.

WARDER.

I will, Sire. [*Goes out and re-enters with* KARABHAKA.] Behold the King! Approach.

KARABHAKA.

Victory to the King! The Queen-mother bids me say that in four days from the present time she intends celebrating a solemn ceremony for the advancement and preservation of her son. She expects that your Majesty will honour her with your presence on that occasion.

KING.

This places me in a dilemma. Here, on the one hand, is the commission of these holy men to be executed; and, on the other, the command of my revered parent to be obeyed.

Both duties are too sacred to be neglected. What is to be done?

MÁTHAVYA.

You will have to take up an intermediate position between the two, like King Triśanku,[44] who was suspended between heaven and earth, because the sage Viśwámitra commanded him to mount up to heaven, and the gods ordered him down again.

KING.

I am certainly very much perplexed. For here,

Two different duties are required of me
In widely distant places; how can I
In my own person satisfy them both?
Thus is my mind distracted and impelled
In opposite directions, like a stream
That, driven back by rocks, still rushes on,
Forming two currents in its eddying course.

[*Reflecting.*] Friend Máthavya, as you were my playfellow in childhood, the Queen has always received you like a second son; go you, then, back to her and tell her of my solemn engagement to assist these holy men. You can supply my place in the ceremony, and act the part of a son to the Queen.

MÁṬHAVYA.

With the greatest pleasure in the world; but don't suppose that I am really coward enough to have the slightest fear of those trumpery demons.

KING. [*Smiling.*

Oh! of course not; a great Bráhman like you could not possibly give way to such weakness.

MÁTHAVYA.

You must let me travel in a manner suitable to the King's younger brother.

KING.

Yes, I shall send my retinue with you, that there may be no further disturbance in this sacred forest.

MÁTHAVYA. [*With a strut.*

Already I feel quite like a young prince.

KING. [*Aside.*

This is a giddy fellow, and in all probability he will let out the truth about my present pursuit to the women of the palace. What is to be done? I must say something to deceive him. [*Aloud to* MÁṬHAVYA, *taking him by the hand.*] Dear friend, I am going to the hermitage wholly and solely out of

respect for its pious inhabitants, and not because I have really any liking for Śakoontalá, the hermit's daughter. Observe,

What suitable communion could there be
Between a monarch and a rustic girl?
I did but feign an idle passion, friend,
Take not in earnest what was said in jest.

MATHAVYA.

Don't distress yourself; I quite understand.

[*Exeunt.*

PRELUDE TO ACT III.

SCENE.—*The Hermitage.*

Enter a YOUNG BRÁHMAN *carrying bundles of Kúsa-grass for the use of the sacrificing priest.*

YOUNG BRÁHMAN.

How wonderful is the power of King Dushyanta! No sooner did he enter our hermitage, than we were able to proceed with our sacrificial rites, unmolested by the evil demons.

No need to fix the arrow to the bow;
The mighty monarch sounds the quivering string,

And, by the thunder of his arms dismayed,
Our demon foes are scattered to the wind.

I must now, therefore, make haste and deliver to the sacrificing priests these bundles of Kuśa-grass, to be strewn round the altar. [*Walking and looking about; then addressing some one off the stage.*] Why, Priyamvadá, for whose use are you carrying that ointment of Usíra-root[45] and those lotus leaves with fibres attached to them? [*Listening for her answer.*] What say you?—that Śakoontalá is suffering from fever produced by exposure to the sun, and that this ointment is to cool her burning frame? Nurse her with care, then, Priyamvadá, for she is cherished by our reverend superior as the very breath of his nostrils.[46] I, for my part, will contrive that soothing waters, hallowed in the sacrifice, be administered to her by the hands of Gautamí.

[*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The Sacred Grove.*

Enter KING DUSHYANTA, *with the air of one in love.*

KING. [*Sighing thoughtfully.*

The holy sage possesses magic power
In virtue of his penance; she, his ward,
Under the shadow of his tutelage
Rests in security. I know it well;
Yet sooner shall the rushing cataract
In foaming eddies re-ascend the steep,
Than my fond heart turn back from its pursuit.

God of Love! God of the flowery shafts![47] we are all of us cruelly deceived by thee, and by the Moon, however deserving of confidence you may both appear.

For not to us do these thine arrows seem
Pointed with tender flowerets; not to us
Doth the pale moon irradiate the earth
With beams of silver fraught with cooling dews:

But on our fevered frames the moon-beams fall
Like darts of fire, and every flower-tipt shaft
Of Káma,[47] as it probes our throbbing hearts,
Seems to be barbed with hardest adamant

Adorable god of love! hast thou no pity for me? [*In a tone of anguish.*] How can thy arrows be so sharp when they are pointed with flowers? Ah! I know the reason:

E'en now in thine unbodied essence lurks
The fire of Śiva's anger,[48] like the flame
That ever hidden in the secret depths
Of ocean, smoulders there unseen.[49] How else
Could'st thou, all immaterial as thou art,
Inflame our hearts thus fiercely?—thou, whose form
Was scorched to ashes by a sudden flash
From the offended god's terrific eye.

Yet, methinks,

Welcome this anguish, welcome to my heart
These rankling wounds inflicted by the god,
Who on his scutcheon bears the monster-fish
Slain by his prowess: welcome death itself,
So that, commissioned by the lord of love,
This fair one be my executioner.

Adorable divinity! Can I by no reproaches excite your commiseration?

Have I not daily offered at thy shrine
Innumerable vows, the only food
Of thine etherial essence? Are my prayers
Thus to be slighted? Is it meet that thou
Should'st aim thy shafts at thy true votary's heart
Drawing thy bow-string even to thy ear?

[*Pacing up and down in a melancholy manner.*] Now that the holy men have completed their rites, and have no more need of my services, how shall I dispel my melancholy? [*Sighing.*] I have but one resource. Oh for another sight of the idol of my soul! I will seek her. [*Glancing at the sun.*] In all probability, as the sun's heat is now at its height, Śakoontalá is passing her time under the shade of the bowers on the banks of the Máliní, attended by her maidens. I will go and look for her there. [*Walking and looking about.*] I suspect the fair one has but just passed by this avenue of young trees.

Here, as she tripped along, her fingers plucked
The opening buds: these lacerated plants,
Shorn of their fairest blossoms by her hand,

Seem like dismembered trunks, whose recent wounds
Are still unclosed; while from the bleeding socket
Of many a severed stalk, the milky juice
Still slowly trickles, and betrays her path.

[*Feeling a breeze.*] What a delicious breeze meets me in this spot!

Here may the zephyr, fragrant with the scent
Of lotuses, and laden with the spray
Caught from the waters of the rippling stream,
Fold in its close embrace my fevered limbs.

[*Walking and looking about.*] She must be somewhere in the neighbourhood of this arbour of overhanging creepers, enclosed by plantations of cane. [*Looking down.*]

For at the entrance here I plainly see
A line of footsteps printed in the sand.
Here are the fresh impressions of her feet;
Their well-known outline faintly marked in front,
More deeply towards the heel; betokening
The graceful undulation of her gait.[51]

I will peep through those branches. [*Walking and looking. With transport.*] Ah! now my eyes are gratified by an entrancing sight. Yonder is the beloved of my heart reclining

on a rock strewn with flowers, and attended by her two friends. How fortunate! Concealed behind the leaves, I will listen to their conversation, without raising their suspicions. [*Stands concealed, and gazes at them.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ, *and her two attendants, holding fans in their hands, are discovered as described.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

[*Fanning her. In a tone of affection.*

Dearest Śakoontalá, is the breeze raised by these broad lotus-leaves refreshing to you?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Dear friends, why should you trouble yourselves to fan me?

[PRIYAMVADA *and* ANASÚYÁ *look sorrowfully at one another.*

KING.

Śakoontalá seems indeed to be seriously ill. [*Thoughtfully.*] Can it be the intensity of the heat that has affected her? or does my heart suggest the true cause of her malady? [*Gazing at her passionately.*] Why should I doubt it?

The maiden's spotless bosom is o'erspread
With cooling balsam; on her slender arm
Her only bracelet, twined with lotus-stalks,

Hangs loose and withered: her recumbent form
Expresses languor. Ne'er could noon-day sun
Inflict such fair disorder on a maid—
No, love, and love alone is here to blame.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

[*Aside to* ANASÚYA.

I have observed, Anasúyá, that Śakoontalá has been indisposed ever since her first interview with King Dushyanta. Depend upon it, her ailment is to be traced to this source.

ANASÚYÁ.

The same suspicion, dear, has crossed my mind. But I will at once ask her and ascertain the truth. [*Aloud*] Dear Śakoontalá, I am about to put a question to you. Your indisposition is really very serious.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Half-rising from her couch.*

What were you going to ask?

ANASÚYÁ.

We know very little about love-matters, dear Śakoontalá; but for all that, I cannot help suspecting your present state to be something similar to that of the lovers we have read about in romances. Tell us frankly what is the cause of your

disorder. It is useless to apply a remedy, until the disease be understood.

KING.

Anasúyá bears me out in my suspicion.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

I am, indeed, deeply in love; but cannot rashly disclose my passion to these young girls.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

What Anasúyá says, dear Śakoontalá, is very just. Why give so little heed to your ailment? Every day you are becoming thinner; though I must confess your complexion is still as beautiful as ever.

KING.

Priyamvadá speaks most truly.

Sunk is her velvet cheek; her wasted bosom
Loses its fulness; e'en her slender waist
Grows more attenuate; her face is wan,
Her shoulders droop;—as when the vernal blasts
Sear the young blossoms of the Mádhaví,[52]
Blighting their bloom; so mournful is the change,
Yet in its sadness, fascinating still,

Inflicted by the mighty lord of love
On the fair figure of the hermit's daughter.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Dear friends, to no one would I rather reveal the nature of my malady than to you; but I should only be troubling you.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

Nay, this is the very point about which we are so solicitous. Sorrow shared with affectionate friends is relieved of half its poignancy.

KING.

Pressed by the partners of her joys and griefs,
Her much beloved companions, to reveal
The cherished secret locked within her breast,
She needs must utter it; although her looks
Encourage me to hope, my bosom throbs
As anxiously I listen for her answer.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Know then, dear friends, that from the first moment the illustrious Prince who is the guardian of our sacred grove, presented himself to my sight—[*Stops short, and appears confused.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

Say on, dear Śakoontalá, say on.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Ever since that happy moment, my heart's affections have been fixed upon him, and my energies of mind and body have all deserted me, as you see.

KING. [*With rapture.*

Her own lips have uttered the words I most longed to hear.

Love lit the flame, and Love himself allays
My burning fever, as when gathering clouds
Rise o'er the earth in summer's dazzling noon,
And grateful showers dispel the morning heat.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

You must consent, then, dear friends, to contrive some means by which I may find favour with the King, or you will have ere long to assist at my funeral.

KING.

Enough! These words remove all my doubts.

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Aside to* ANASÚYÁ.

She is far gone in love, dear Anasúyá, and no time ought to be lost. Since she has fixed her affections on a monarch who is the ornament of Puru's line, we need not hesitate for a moment to express our approval.

ANASÚYÁ.

I quite agree with you.

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Aloud.*

We wish you joy, dear Śakoontalá. Your affections are fixed on an object in every respect worthy of you. The noblest river will unite itself to the ocean, and the lovely Mádhaví-creeper clings naturally to the Mango, the only tree capable of supporting it.

KING.

Why need we wonder if the beautiful constellation Viśákhá pines to be united with the Moon.[53]

ANASÚYÁ.

By what stratagem can we best secure to our friend the accomplishment of her heart's desire both speedily and secretly?

PRIYAMVADÁ.

The latter point is all we have to think about. As to 'speedily,' I look upon the whole affair as already settled.

ANASÚYÁ.

How so?

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Did you not observe how the King betrayed his liking by

the tender manner in which he gazed upon her, and how thin he has become the last few days, as if he had been lying awake thinking of her?

KING. [*Looking at himself.*

Quite true! I certainly am becoming thin from want of sleep:

As night by night in anxious thought I raise
This wasted arm to rest my sleepless head,
My jewelled bracelet, sullied by the tears
That trickle from my eyes in scalding streams,
Slips towards my elbow from my shrivelled wrist.
Oft I replace the bauble, but in vain;
So easily it spans the fleshless limb
That e'en the rough and corrugated skin,
Scarred by the bow-string, will not check its fall.[54]

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Thoughtfully.*

An idea strikes me, Anasúyá. Let Śakoontalá write a love-letter; I will conceal it in a flower, and contrive to drop it in the King's path. He will surely mistake it for the remains of some sacred offering, and will, in all probability, pick it up.

ANASÚYÁ.

A very ingenious device! It has my entire approval; but what says Śakoontalá?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

I must consider before I can consent to it.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Could you not, dear Śakoontalá, think of some pretty composition in verse, containing a delicate declaration of your love?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Well, I will do my best; but my heart trembles when I think of the chances of a refusal.

KING. [*With rapture.*

Too timid maid, here stands the man from whom
Thou fearest a repulse; supremely blessed
To call thee all his own. Well might he doubt
His title to thy love; but how could'st thou
Believe thy beauty powerless to subdue him?

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

You undervalue your own merits, dear Śakoontalá. What man in his senses would intercept with the skirt of his robe

the bright rays of the autumnal moon, which alone can allay the fever of his body?

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Smiling.*

Then it seems I must do as I am bid. [*Sits down and appears to be thinking.*]

KING.

How charming she looks! My very eyes forget to wink, jealous of losing even for an instant a sight so enchanting.

How beautiful the movement of her brow,
As through her mind love's tender fancies flow!
And, as she weighs her thoughts, how sweet to trace
The ardent passion mantling in her face!

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Dear girls, I have thought of a verse, but I have no writing-materials at hand.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Write the letters with your nail on this lotus-leaf, which is smooth as a parrot's breast.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*After writing the verse.*

Listen, dear friends, and tell me whether the ideas are appropriately expressed.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

We are all attention.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Reads.*

I know not the secret thy bosom conceals,
Thy form is not near me to gladden my sight;
But sad is the tale that my fever reveals,
Of the love that consumes me by day and by night.

KING.

[*Advancing hastily towards her.*

Nay, Love does but warm thee, fair maiden,—thy frame
Only droops like the bud in the glare of the noon;
But me he consumes with a pitiless flame,
As the beams of the day-star destroy the pale moon.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

[*Looking at him joyfully, and rising to salute him.*

Welcome, the desire of our hearts, that so speedily presents itself! [ŚAKOONTALÁ *makes an effort to rise.*

KING.

Nay, trouble not thyself, dear maiden,
Move not to do me homage; let thy limbs
Still softly rest upon their flowery couch,

And gather fragrance from the lotus-stalks
Bruised by the fevered contact of thy frame.

ANASÚYÁ.

Deign, gentle Sir, to seat yourself on the rock on which our friend is reposing.

[*The* KING *sits down.* ŚAKOONTALÁ *is confused.*

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Any one may see at a glance that you are deeply attached to each other. But the affection I have for my friend prompts me to say something of which you hardly require to be informed.

KING.

Do not hesitate to speak out, my good girl. If you omit to say what is in your mind, you may be sorry for it afterwards.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Is it not your special office as a King to remove the suffering of your subjects who are in trouble?

KING.

Such is my duty, most assuredly.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Know, then that our dear friend has been brought to her

present state of suffering entirely through love for you. Her life is in your hands; take pity on her and restore her to health.

KING.

Excellent maiden, our attachment is mutual. It is I who am the most honoured by it.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Looking at* PRIYAMVADÁ.

What do you mean by detaining the King, who must be anxious to return to his royal consorts after so long a separation?

KING.

Sweet maiden, banish from thy mind the thought
That I could love another. Thou dost reign
Supreme, without a rival, in my heart,
And I am thine alone: disown me not,
Else must I die a second deadlier death,—
Killed by thy words, as erst by Káma's[47] shafts.

ANASÚYÁ.

Kind sir, we have heard it said that kings have many favourite consorts. You must not, then, by your behaviour towards our dear friend, give her relations cause to sorrow for her.

KING.

Listen, gentle maiden, while in a few words I quiet your anxiety.

Though many beauteous forms my palace grace,
Henceforth two things alone will I esteem
The glory of my royal dynasty;—
My sea-girt realm, and this most lovely maid.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

We are satisfied by your assurances.

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Glancing on one side.*

See, Anasúyá, there is our favourite little fawn running about in great distress, and turning its eyes in every direction as if looking for its mother; come, let us help the little thing to find her. [*Both move away.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Dear friends, dear friends, leave me not alone and unprotected. Why need you both go?

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

Unprotected! when the Protector of the world is at your side. [*Exeunt.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

What! have they both really left me?

KING.

Distress not thyself, sweet maiden. Thy adorer is at hand to wait upon thee.

Oh let me tend thee, fair one, in the place
Of thy dear friends; and with broad lotus fans,
Raise cooling breezes to refresh thy frame;
Or shall I rather, with caressing touch,
Allay the fever of thy limbs, and soothe
Thy aching feet, beauteous as blushing lilies?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Nay, touch me not. I will not incur the censure of those whom I am bound to respect. [*Rises and attempts to go.*

KING.

Fair one, the heat of noon has not yet subsided, and thy body is still feeble.

How canst thou quit thy fragrant couch of flowers,
And from thy throbbing bosom cast aside
Its covering of lotus-leaves, to brave
With weak and fainting limbs the noon-day heat?

[*Forces her to turn back.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Infringe not the rules of decorum, mighty descendant of Puru. Remember, though I love you, I have no power to dispose of myself.

KING.

Why this fear of offending your relations, timid maid? When your venerable foster-father hears of it, he will not find fault with you. He knows that the law permits us to be united without consulting him.

In Indra's heaven, so at least 'tis said,
No nuptial rites prevail,[55] nor is the bride
Led to the altar by her future spouse;
But all in secret does the bridegroom plight
His troth, and each unto the other vow
Mutual allegiance. Such espousals, too,
Are authorised on earth, and many daughters
Of royal saints thus wedded to their lords,
Have still received their father's benison.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Leave me, leave me; I must take counsel with my female friends.

KING.

I will leave thee when—

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

When?

KING.

When I have gently stolen from thy lips
Their yet untasted nectar, to allay
The raging of my thirst, e'en as the bee
Sips the fresh honey from the opening bud.

[*Attempts to raise her face.* ŚAKOONTALÁ *tries to prevent him.*]

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

The loving birds, doomed by fate to nightly separation,[56] must bid farewell to each other, for evening is at hand.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*In confusion.*

Great Prince, I hear the voice of the matron Gautamí. She is coming this way, to inquire after my health. Hasten and conceal yourself behind the branches.

KING.

I will. [*Conceals himself.*

Enter GAUTAMÍ *with a vase in her hand, preceded by two attendants.*

ATTENDANTS.

This way, most venerable Gautamí.

GAUTAMÍ.

[*Approaching* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

My child, is the fever of thy limbs allayed?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Venerable mother, there is certainly a change for the better.

GAUTAMÍ.

Let me sprinkle you with this holy water, and all your ailments will depart. [*Sprinkling* ŚAKOONTALÁ *on the head.*] The day is closing, my child; come, let us go to the cottage.

[*They all move away.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

Oh my heart! thou didst fear to taste of happiness when it was within thy reach. Now that the object of thy desires is torn from thee, how bitter will be thy remorse, how distracting thine anguish! [*Moving on a few steps and stopping. Aloud.*]

Farewell! bower of creepers, sweet soother of my sufferings, farewell! may I soon again be happy under thy shade.

[*Exit reluctantly with the others.*

KING.

[*Returning to his former seat in the arbour. Sighing.*

Alas! how many are the obstacles to the accomplishment of our wishes!

Albeit she did coyly turn away
Her glowing cheek, and with her fingers guard
Her pouting lips, that murmured a denial
In faltering accents, she did yield herself
A sweet reluctant captive to my will,
As eagerly I raised her lovely face:
But ere with gentle force I stole the kiss,
Too envious Fate did mar my daring purpose.

Whither now shall I betake myself? I will tarry for a brief space in this bower of creepers, so endeared to me by the presence of my beloved Śakoontalá. [*Looking round.*

Here printed on the flowery couch I see
The fair impression of her slender limbs;
Here is the sweet confession of her love,
Traced with her nail upon the lotus leaf:

And yonder are the withered lily-stalks
That graced her wrist. While all around I view
Things that recal her image, can I quit
This bower, e'en though its living charm be fled?

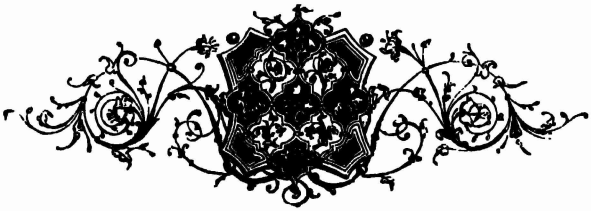
A VOICE IN THE AIR.

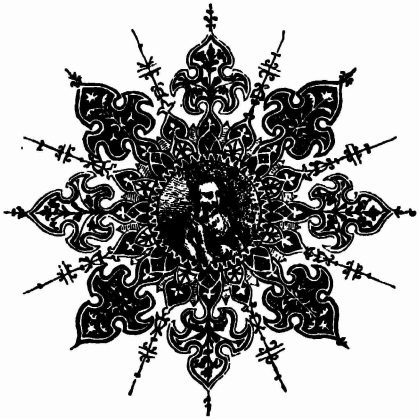
Great King,
Scarce is our evening sacrifice begun,
When evil demons, lurid as the clouds
That gather round the dying orb of day,
Cluster in hideous troops, obscene and dread,
About our altars, casting far and near
Terrific shadows, while the sacred fire
Sheds a pale lustre o'er their ghostly shapes.

KING.

I come to the rescue, I come.

[*Exit.*





PRELUDE TO ACT IV.

SCENE.—*The Garden of the Hermitage.*

Enter PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ *in the act of gathering flowers.*

ANASÚYÁ.

Although, dear Priyamvadá, it rejoices my heart to think that Śakoontalá has been happily united to a husband in every respect worthy of her, by the form of marriage prevalent among Indra's celestial musicians, nevertheless, I cannot help feeling somewhat uneasy in my mind.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

How so?

ANASÚYÁ.

You know that the pious King was gratefully dismissed by the hermits on the successful termination of their sacrificial rites. He has now returned to his capital, leaving Śakoontalá under our care; and it may be doubted whether, in the society of his royal consorts, he will not forget all that has taken place in this hermitage of ours.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

On that score be at ease. Persons of his noble nature are not so destitute of all honourable feeling. I confess, however, that there is one point about which I am rather anxious. What, think you, will father Kanwa say when he hears what has occurred?

ANASÚYÁ.

In my opinion, he will approve the marriage.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

What makes you think so?

ANASÚYÁ.

From the first, it was always his fixed purpose to bestow the maiden on a husband worthy of her; and since heaven has given her such a husband, his wishes have been realized without any trouble to himself.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

[*Looking at the flower-basket.*

We have gathered flowers enough for the sacred offering, dear Anasúyá.

ANASÚYÁ.

Well, then, let us now gather more, that we may have wherewith to propitiate the guardian-deity of our dear Śakoontalá.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

By all means. [*They continue gathering.*

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

Ho there! See you not that I am here?

ANASÚYÁ. [*Listening.*

That must be the voice of a guest announcing his arrival.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Surely, Śakoontalá is not absent from the cottage. [*Aside.*] Her heart at least is absent, I fear.

ANASÚYÁ.

Come along, come along; we have gathered flowers enough.

[*They move away.*

THE SAME VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

"Woe to thee, maiden, for daring to slight a guest like me!
Shall I stand here unwelcomed; even I,
A very mine of penitential merit,

Worthy of all respect? Shalt thou, rash maid,
Thus set at nought the ever sacred ties
Of hospitality? and fix thy thoughts
Upon the cherished object of thy love,
While I am present? Thus I curse thee, then—
He, even he of whom thou thinkest, he
Shall think no more of thee; nor in his heart,
Retain thine image. Vainly shalt thou strive
To waken his remembrance of the past;
He shall disown thee, even as the sot,
Roused from his midnight drunkenness, denies
The words he uttered in his revellings.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Alas! alas! I fear a terrible misfortune has occurred. Śakoontalá, from absence of mind, must have offended some guest whom she was bound to treat with respect. [*Looking behind the scenes.*] Ah! yes; I see, and no less a person, than the great sage Durvásas,[57] who is known to be most irascible. He it is that has just cursed her, and is now retiring with hasty strides, trembling with passion, and looking as if nothing could turn him. His wrath is like a consuming fire.

ANASÚYÁ.

Go quickly, dear Priyamvadá, throw yourself at his feet, and persuade him to come back, while I prepare a propitiatory offering[58] for him, with water and refreshments.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

I will. [*Exit.*

ANASÚYÁ.

[*Advancing hastily a few steps and stumbling.*

Alas! alas! this comes of being in a hurry. My foot has slipped and my basket of flowers has fallen from my hand.

[*Stays to gather them up.*

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Re-entering.*

Well, dear Anasúyá, I have done my best; but what living being could succeed in pacifying such a cross-grained, ill-tempered old fellow? However, I managed to mollify him a little.

ANASÚYÁ. [*Smiling.*

Even a little was much for him. Say on.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

When he refused to turn back, I implored his forgiveness in these words: 'Most venerable sage, pardon, I beseech you, this first offence of a young and inexperienced girl, who was

ignorant of the respect due to your saintly character and exalted rank.'

ANASÚYÁ.

And what did he reply?

PRIYAMVADÁ.

'My word must not be falsified; but at the sight of the ring of recognition the spell shall cease.' So saying, he disappeared.

ANASÚYÁ.

Oh! then we may breathe again; for now I think of it, the King himself, at his departure, fastened on Śakoontalá's finger, as a token of remembrance, a ring on which his own name was engraved. She has, therefore, a remedy for her misfortune at her own command.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Come, dear Anasúyá, let us proceed with our religious duties. [*They walk away.*

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Looking off the stage.*

See, Anasúyá, there sits our dear friend, motionless as a statue, resting her face on her left hand, her whole mind absorbed in thinking of her absent husband. She can pay no attention to herself, much less to a stranger.

ANASÚYÁ.

Priyamvadá, let this affair never pass our lips. We must spare our dear friend's feelings. Her constitution is too delicate to bear much emotion.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

I agree with you. Who would think of watering a tender jasmine with hot water?

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*The Neighbourhood of the Hermitage.*

Enter one of KANWA'S PUPILS *just arisen from his couch at the dawn of day.*

PUPIL.

My master, the venerable Kanwa, who is but lately returned from his pilgrimage, has ordered me to ascertain how the time goes. I have therefore come into the open air to see if it be still dark. [*Walking and looking about.*] Oh! the dawn has already broken.

Lo! in one quarter of the sky, the Moon,
Lord of the herbs and night-expanding flowers,
Sinks towards his bed behind the western hills;
While in the east, preceded by the Dawn,
His blushing charioteer,[59] the glorious Sun
Begins his course, and far into the gloom
Casts the first radiance of his orient beams.

Hail! co-eternal orbs, that rise to set,
And set to rise again; symbols divine
Of man's reverses, life's vicissitudes.

And now,

While the round Moon withdraws his looming disc
Beneath the western sky, the full-blown flower
Of the night-loving lotus[60] sheds her leaves
In sorrow for his loss, bequeathing nought
But the sweet memory of her loveliness
To my bereavëd sight: e'en as the bride
Disconsolately mourns her absent lord,
And yields her heart a prey to anxious grief.

ANASÚYÁ. [*Entering abruptly.*

Little as I know of the ways of the world, I cannot help thinking that King Dushyanta is treating Śakoontalá very improperly.

PUPIL.

Well, I must let my revered preceptor know that it is time to offer the burnt oblation. [*Exit.*

ANASÚYÁ.

I am broad awake, but what shall I do? I have no energy

to go about my usual occupations. My hands and feet seem to have lost their power. Well, Love has gained his object; and Love only is to blame for having induced our dear friend, in the innocence of her heart, to confide in such a perfidious man. Possibly, however, the imprecation of Durvásas may be already taking effect. Indeed, I cannot otherwise account for the King's strange conduct, in allowing so long a time to elapse without even a letter; and that, too, after so many promises and protestations. I cannot think what to do, unless we send him the ring which was to be the ṭoken of recognition. But which of these austere hermits could we ask to be the bearer of it? Then, again, Father Kanwa has just returned from his pilgrimage: and how am I to inform him of Śakoontalá's marriage to King Dushyanta, and her expectation of being soon a mother? I never could bring myself to tell him, even if I felt that Śakoontalá had been in fault, which she certainly has not. What is to be done?

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Entering; joyfully.*

Quick! quick! Anasúyá! come and assist in the joyful preparations for Śakoontalá's departure to her husband's palace.

ANASÚYÁ.

My dear girl, what can you mean?

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Listen, now, and I will tell you all about it. I went just now to Śakoontalá, to inquire whether she had slept comfortably——

ANASÚYÁ.

Well, well; go on.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

She was sitting with her face bowed down to the very ground with shame, when father Kanwa entered and, embracing her, of his own accord offered her his congratulations. 'I give thee joy, my child,' he said, 'we have had an auspicious omen. The priest who offered the oblation dropped it into the very centre of the sacred fire,[61] though thick smoke obstructed his vision. Henceforth thou wilt cease to be an object of compassion. This very day I purpose sending thee, under the charge of certain trusty hermits, to the King's palace; and shall deliver thee into the hands of thy husband, as I would commit knowledge to the keeping of a wise and faithful student.

ANASÚYÁ.

Who, then informed the holy Father of what passed in his absence?

PRIYAMVADÁ.

As he was entering the sanctuary of the consecrated fire, an invisible being chanted a verse in celestial strains.

ANASÚYÁ. [*With astonishment.*

Indeed! pray repeat it.

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Repeating the verse.*

Glows in thy daughter King Dushyanta's glory,
As in the sacred tree the mystic fire.[62]
Let worlds rejoice to hear the welcome story;
And may the son immortalize the sire.

ANASÚYÁ. [*Embracing* PRIYAMVADA.

Oh, my dear Priyamvadá, what delightful news! I am pleased beyond measure; yet when I think that we are to lose our dear Sakoontalá this very day, a feeling of melancholy mingles with my joy.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

We shall find means of consoling ourselves after her departure. Let the dear creature only be made happy, at any cost.

ANASUYÁ.

Yes, yes, Priyamvadá, it shall be so; and now to prepare our bridal array. I have always looked forward to this occasion, and some time since, I deposited a beautiful garland of Keśara flowers in a cocoa-nut box, and suspended it on a bough of yonder mango-tree. Be good enough to stretch out your hand and take it down, while I compound unguents and perfumes with this consecrated paste and these blades of sacred grass.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Very well. *Exit* ANASÚYÁ. PRIYAMVADÁ *takes down the flowers.*

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

Gautamí, bid Śárngarava and the others hold themselves in readiness to escort Śakoontalá.

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Listening.*

Quick, quick, Anasúyá! They are calling the hermits who are to go with Śakoontalá to Hastinápur.[63]

ANASÚYÁ.

[*Re-entering, with the perfumed unguents in her hand.*

Come along then, Priyamvadá; I am ready to go with you.

[*They walk away.*

PRIYAMVADÁ. [*Looking*

See! there sits Śakoontalá, her locks arranged even at this early hour of the morning. The holy women of the hermitage are congratulating her, and invoking blessings on her head, while they present her with wedding-gifts and offerings of consecrated wild-rice. Let us join them.

[*They approach.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ *is seen seated, with women surrounding her, occupied in the manner described.*

FIRST WOMAN. [*To* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

My child, may'st thou receive the title of 'Chief-queen,' and may thy husband delight to honour thee above all others!

SECOND WOMAN.

My child, may'st thou be the mother of a hero!

THIRD WOMAN.

My child, may'st thou be highly honoured by thy lord!

[*Exeunt all the women, excepting* GAUTAMÍ, *after blessing* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

[*Approaching.*

Dear Śakoontalá, we are come to assist you at your toilet, and may a blessing attend it!

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Welcome, dear friends, welcome. Sit down here.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

[*Taking the baskets containing the bridal decorations, and sitting down.*

Now, then, dearest, prepare to let us dress you. We must first rub your limbs with these perfumed unguents.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

I ought indeed to be grateful for your kind offices, now that I am so soon to be deprived of them. Dear, dear friends, perhaps I shall never be dressed by you again.

[*Bursts into tears.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

Weep not, dearest; tears are out of season on such a happy occasion. [*They wipe away her tears and begin to dress her.*

PRIYAMVADÁ.

Alas! these simple flowers and rude ornaments which our hermitage offers in abundance, do not set off your beauty as it deserves.

Enter TWO YOUNG HERMITS, *bearing costly presents.*

BOTH HERMITS.

Here are ornaments suitable for a queen.

[*The women look at them in astonishment.*

GAUTAMÍ.

Why, Nárada, my son, whence came these?

FIRST HERMIT.

You owe them to the devotion of Father Kanwa.

GAUTAMÍ.

Did he create them by the power of his own mind?

SECOND HERMIT.

Certainly not; but you shall hear. The venerable sage ordered us to collect flowers for Śakoontalá from the forest-trees; and we went to the wood for that purpose, when

Straightway depending from a neighbouring tree
Appeared a robe of linen tissue, pure
And spotless as a moonbeam—mystic pledge
Of bridal happiness; another tree
Distilled a roseate dyê wherewith to stain
The lady's feet; [112] and other branches near
Glistened with rare and costly ornaments.

While, 'midst the leaves, the hands of forest-nymphs,
Vying in beauty with the opening buds,
Presented us with sylvan offerings.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

[*Looking at* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

The wood-nymphs have done you honour, indeed. This favour doubtless signifies that you are soon to be received as a happy wife into your husband's house, and are from this forward to become the partner of his royal fortunes.

[ŚAKOONTALÁ *appears confused.*

FIRST HERMIT.

Come, Gautama; Father Kanwa has finished his ablutions. Let us go and inform him of the favour we have received from the deities who preside over our trees.

SECOND HERMIT.

By all means. [*Exeunt.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

Alas! what are we to do? We are unused to such splendid decorations, and are at a loss how to arrange them. Our knowledge of painting must be our guide. We will dispose the ornaments as we have seen them in pictures.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Whatever pleases you, dear girls, will please me. I have perfect confidence in your taste.

[*They commence dressing her.*

Enter KANWA, *having just finished his ablutions.*

KANWA.

This day my loved one leaves me, and my heart
Is heavy with its grief: the streams of sorrow
Choked at the source, repress my faltering voice.
I have no words to speak; mine eyes are dimmed
By the dark shadows of the thoughts that rise
Within my soul. If such the force of grief
In an old hermit parted from his nursling,
What anguish must the stricken parent feel—
Bereft for ever of an only daughter.

[*Advances towards* ŚAKOONTALA.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

Now, dearest Śakoontalá, we have finished decorating you. You have only to put on the two linen mantles.

[ŚAKOONTALÁ *rises and puts them on.*

GAUTAMÍ.

Daughter, see, here comes thy foster-father; he is eager to fold thee in his arms; his eyes swim with tears of joy. Hasten to do him reverence.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Reverently.*

My father, I salute you.

KANWA.

My daughter,

May'st thou be highly honoured by thy lord,
E'en as Yayáti Śarmishthá adored! [64]
And, as she bore him Puru, so may'st thou
Bring forth a son to whom the world shall bow!

GAUTAMÍ.

Most venerable father, she accepts your benediction as if she already possessed the boon it confers.

KAṆWA.

Now come this way, my child, and walk reverently round these sacrificial fires. [*They all walk round.*

KANWA.

Repeats a prayer in the metre of the Ṛig-veda.

Holy flames, that gleam around
Every altar's hallowed ground;

Holy flames, whose frequent food
Is the consecrated wood,
And for whose encircling bed,
Sacred Kusá-grass is spread; [65]
Holy flames, that waft to heaven
Sweet oblations daily given,
Mortal guilt to purge away;—
Hear, oh hear me, when I pray—
Purify my child this day!

Now then, my daughter, set out on thy journey. [*Looking on one side.*] Where are thy attendants, Śárngarava and the others?

YOUNG HERMIT. [*Entering.*

Here we are, most venerable father.

KANWA.

Lead the way for thy sister.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Come, Sakoontalá, let us proceed. [*All move away.*

KAṆWA.

Hear me, ye trees that surround our hermitage!

Śakoontalá ne'er moistened in the stream
Her own parched lips, till she had fondly poured
Its purest water on your thirsty roots:
And oft, when she would fain have decked her hair
With your thick-clustering blossoms, in her love
She robbed you not e'en of a single flower.
Her highest joy was ever to behold
The early glory of your opening buds:
Oh, then, dismiss her with a kind farewell!
This very day she quits her father's home,
To seek the palace of her wedded lord.

[*The note of a Köil*[66] *is heard.*

Hark! heard'st thou not the answer of the trees,
Our sylvan sisters, warbled in the note
Of the melodious Köil[66]? they dismiss
Their dear Śakoontalá with loving wishes.

VOICES IN THE AIR.

Fare thee well, journey pleasantly on amid streams
Where the lotuses bloom, and the sun's glowing beams
Never pierce the deep shade of the wide-spreading trees,
While gently around thee shall sport the cool breeze;

Then light be thy footsteps and easy thy tread,
Beneath thee shall carpets of lilies be spread.
Journey on to thy lord, let thy spirit be gay,
For the smiles of all Nature shall gladden thy way.

[*All listen with astonishment.*

GAUTAMÍ.

Daughter! the nymphs of the wood, who love thee with the affection of a sister, dismiss thee with kind wishes for thy happiness. Take thou leave of them reverentially.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Bowing respectfully and walking on.*

Aside to her friend.

Eager as I am, dear Priyamvadá, to see my husband once more, yet my feet refuse to move, now that I am quitting for ever the home of my girlhood.

PRIYAMVADÁ.

You are not the only one, dearest, to feel the bitterness of parting. As the time of separation approaches, the whole grove seems to share your anguish.

In sorrow for thy loss, the herd of deer
Forget to browse; the peacock on the lawn

Ceases its dance;[67] the very trees around us
Shed their pale leaves, like tears, upon the ground.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Recollecting herself.*

My father, let me, before I go, bid adieu to my pet jasmine, the Moonlight of the Grove.[68] I love the plant almost as a sister.

KANWA.

Yes, yes, my child, I remember thy sisterly affection for the creeper. Here it is on the right.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Approaching the jasmine.*

My beloved jasmine, most brilliant of climbing plants, how sweet it is to see thee cling thus fondly to thy husband, the mango-tree; yet, prithee, turn thy twining arms for a moment in this direction to embrace thy sister; she is going far away, and may never see thee again.

KANWA.

Daughter, the cherished purpose of my heart
Has ever been to wed thee to a spouse
That should be worthy of thee; such a spouse
Hast thou thyself, by thine own merits, won.

To him thou goest, and about his neck
Soon shalt thou cling confidingly, as now
Thy favourite jasmine twines its loving arms
Around the sturdy mango. Leave thou it
To its protector—e'en as I consign
Thee to thy lord, and henceforth from my mind
Banish all anxious thought on thy behalf.

Proceed on thy journey, my child.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*To* PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ.

To you, my sweet companions, I leave it as a keepsake. Take charge of it when I am gone.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

[*Bursting into tears.*

And to whose charge do you leave us, dearest? Who will care for us when you are gone?

KANWA.

For shame, Anasúyá! dry your tears. Is this the way to cheer your friend at a time when she needs your support and consolation? [*All move on.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

My father, see you there my pet deer, grazing close to the hermitage? She expects soon to fawn, and even now the weight of the little one she carries hinders her movements. Do not forget to send me word when she becomes a mother.

KANWA.

I will not forget it.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Feeling herself drawn back.*

What can this be, fastened to my dress? [*Turns round.*

KANWA.

My daughter,

It is the little fawn, thy foster-child.
Poor helpless orphan! it remembers well
How with a mother's tenderness and love
Thou did'st protect it, and with grains of rice
From thine own hand did'st daily nourish it;
And, ever and anon, when some sharp thorn
Had pierced its mouth, how gently thou did'st tend
The bleeding wound, and pour in healing balm.
The grateful nursling clings to its protectress,
Mutely imploring leave to follow her.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

My poor little fawn, dost thou ask to follow an unhappy wretch who hesitates not to desert her companions? When thy mother died, soon after thy birth, I supplied her place, and reared thee with my own hand; and now that thy second mother is about to leave thee, who will care for thee? My father, be thou a mother to her. My child, go back, and be a daughter to my father. [*Moves on, weeping.*

KANWA.

Weep not, my daughter, check the gathering tear
That lurks beneath thine eyelid, ere it flow
And weaken thy resolve; be firm and true—
True to thyself and me; the path of life
Will lead o'er hill and plain, o'er rough and smooth
And all must feel the steepness of the way;
Though rugged be thy course, press boldly on.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Venerable sire! the sacred precept is—'Accompany thy friend as far as the margin of the first stream.' Here then, we are arrived at the border of a lake. It is time for you to give us your final instructions and return.

KANWA.

Be it so; let us tarry for a moment under the shade of this fig-tree.[69] [*They do so.*

KANWA. [*Aside.*

I must think of some appropriate message to send to his majesty King Dushyanta. [*Reflects.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside to* ANASÚYÁ.

See, see, dear Anasúyá, the poor female Chakraváka-bird,[70] whom cruel fate dooms to nightly separation from her mate, calls to him in mournful notes from the other side of the stream, though he is only hidden from her view by the spreading leaves of the water-lily. Her cry is so piteous that I could almost fancy she was lamenting her hard lot in intelligible words.

ANASÚYÁ.

Say not so, dearest.

Fond bird! though sorrow lengthen out her night
Of widowhood, yet with a cry of joy
She hails the morning light that brings her mate
Back to her side. The agony of parting
Would wound us like a sword, but that its edge
Is blunted by the hope of future meeting.

KANWA.

Śárngarava, when you have introduced Śakoontalá into the presence of the King, you must give him this message from me.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Let me hear it, venerable father.

KANWA.

This is it—

Most puissant prince! we here present before thee
One thou art bound to cherish and receive
As thine own wife; yea, even to enthrone
As thine own queen—worthy of equal love
With thine imperial consorts. So much, Sire,
We claim of thee as justice due to us,
In virtue of our holy character—
In virtue of thine honourable rank—
In virtue of the pure spontaneous love
That secretly grew up 'twixt thee and her,
Without consent or privity of us.
We ask no more—the rest we freely leave
To thy just feeling and to destiny.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

A most suitable message. I will take care to deliver it correctly.

KANWA.

And now, my child, a few words of advice for thee. We hermits, though we live secluded from the world, are not ignorant of worldly matters.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

No, indeed. Wise men are conversant with all subjects.

KANWA.

Listen, then, my daughter. When thou reachest thy husband's palace, and art admitted into his family,

Honour thy betters; ever be respectful
To those above thee; and, should others share
Thy husband's love, ne'er yield thyself a prey
To jealousy; but ever be a friend,
A loving friend, to those who rival thee
In his affections. Should thy wedded lord
Treat thee with harshness, thou must never be
Harsh in return, but patient and submissive.
Be to thy menials courteous, and to all
Placed under thee, considerate and kind:

Be never self-indulgent, but avoid
Excess in pleasure; and, when fortune smiles,
Be not puffed up. Thus to thy husband's house
Wilt thou a blessing prove, and not a curse.

What thinks Gautamí of this advice?

GAUTAMÍ.

An excellent compendium, truly, of every wife's duties! Lay it well to heart, my daughter.

KANWA.

Come, my beloved child, one parting embrace for me and for thy companions, and then we leave thee.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

My father, must Priyamvadá and Anasúyá really return with you? They are very dear to me.

KANWA

Yes, my child; they, too, in good time, will be given in marriage to suitable husbands. It would not be proper for them to accompany thee to such a public place. But Gautamí shall be thy companion.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Embracing him.*

Removed from thy bosom, my beloved father, like a young

tendril of the sandal-tree torn from its home in the western mountains,[71] how shall I be able to support life in a foreign soil?

KANWA.

Daughter, thy fears are groundless:

Soon shall thy lord prefer thee to the rank
Of his own consort; and unnumbered cares
Befitting his imperial dignity
Shall constantly engross thee. Then the bliss
Of bearing him a son—a noble boy,
Bright as the day-star, shall transport thy soul
With new delights, and little shalt thou reck
Of the light sorrow that afflicts thee now
At parting from thy father and thy friends.

[ŚAKOONTALÁ *throws herself at her foster-father's feet.*

KANWA.

Blessings on thee, my child! May all my hopes of thee be realized!

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Approaching her friends.*

Come, my two loved companions, embrace me both of you together.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

[*Embracing her.*

Dear Śakoontalá, remember, if the King should by any chance be slow in recognizing you, you have only to show him this ring, on which his own name is engraved.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

The bare thought of it puts me in a tremor.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

There is no real cause for fear, dearest. Excessive affection is too apt to suspect evil where none exists.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Come, lady, we must hasten on. The sun is rising in the heavens.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Looking towards the hermitage.*

Dear father, when shall I ever see this hallowed grove again?

KANWA.

I will tell thee; listen.

When thou hast passed a long and blissful life
As King Dushyanta's queen, and jointly shared
With all the earth his ever-watchful care;

And hast beheld thine own heroic son,
Matchless in arms, united to a spouse
In happy wedlock; when his aged sire,
Thy faithful husband, hath to him resigned
The helm of state; then, weary of the world
Together with Dushyanta thou shalt seek
The calm seclusion of thy former home: [72]
There amid holy scenes to be at peace,
Till thy pure spirit gain its last release.

GAUTAMÍ.

Come, my child, the favourable time for our journey is fast passing. Let thy father return. Venerable Sire, be thou the first to move homewards, or these last words will never end.

KANWA.

Daughter, detain me no longer. My religious duties must not be interrupted.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Again embracing her foster-father.*

Beloved father, thy frame is much enfeebled by penitential exercises. Do not, oh! do not, allow thyself to sorrow too much on my account.

KANWA. [*Sighing.*

How, O my child, shall my bereavëd heart
Forget its bitterness, when, day by day,
Full in my sight shall grow the tender plants
Reared by thy care, or sprung from hallowed grain
Which thy loved hands have strewn around the door—
A frequent offering to our household gods?[73]

Go, my daughter, and may thy journey be prosperous.

[*Exit* ŚAKOONTALÁ *with her escort.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

[*Gazing after* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Alas! alas! she is gone, and now the trees hide our darling from our view.

KANWA. [*Sighing.*

Well, Anasúyá, your sister has departed. Moderate your grief, both of you, and follow me. I go back to the hermitage.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.

Holy father, the sacred grove will be a desert without Śakoontalá. How can we ever return to it?

KANWA.

It is natural enough that your affection should make you view it in this light. [*Walking pensively on.*] As for me, I am quite surprised at myself. Now that I have fairly dismissed her to her husband's house, my mind is easy: for indeed,

A daughter is a loan—a precious jewel
Lent to a parent till her husband claim her.
And now that to her rightful lord and master
I have delivered her, my burdened soul
Is lightened, and I seem to breathe more freely.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE.—*A Room in the Palace.*

The King DUSHYANTA *and the Jester* MÁTHAVYA *are discovered seated.*

MÁṬHAVYA. [*Listening.*

Hark! my dear friend, listen a minute, and you will hear sweet sounds proceeding from the music-room. Some one is singing a charming air. Who can it be? Oh! I know. The queen Hansapadiká is practising her notes, that she may greet you with a new song.

KING.

Hush! Let me listen.

A VOICE SINGS BEHIND THE SCENES.

How often hither did'st thou rove,
Sweet bee, to kiss the mango's cheek;
Oh! leave not, then, thy early love,
The lily's honeyed lip to seek.

KING.

A most impassioned strain, truly!

MÁṬHAVYA.

Do you understand the meaning of the words?

KING. [*Smiling.*

She means to reprove me, because I once paid her great attention, and have lately deserted her for the queen Vasumatí. Go, my dear fellow, and tell Hansapadiká from me that I take her delicate reproof as it is intended.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Very well. [*Rising from his seat.*] But stay—I don't much relish being sent to bear the brunt of her jealousy. The chances are that she will have me seized by the hair of the head and beaten to a jelly. I would as soon expose myself, after a vow of celibacy, to the seductions of a lovely nymph, as encounter the fury of a jealous woman.

KING.

Go, go; you can disarm her wrath by a civil speech; but give her my message.

MÁṬHAVYA.

What must be must be, I suppose. [*Exit.*

KING. [*Aside*

Strange! that song has filled me with a most peculiar sensation. A melancholy feeling has come over me, and I seem to yearn after some long-forgotten object of affection. Singular, indeed! but

Not seldom in our happy hours of ease,
When thought is still, the sight of some fair form,
Or mournful fall of music breathing low,
Will stir strange fancies, thrilling all the soul
With a mysterious sadness, and a sense
Of vague yet earnest longing. Can it be
That the dim memory of events long past,
Or friendships formed in other states of being,[74]
Flits like a passing shadow o'er the spirit?

[*Remains pensive and sad.*

Enter the CHAMBERLAIN.[75]

CHAMBERLAIN.

Alas! to what an advanced period of life have I attained!

Even this wand betrays the lapse of years;
In youthful days 'twas but a useless badge

And symbol of my office; now it serves
As a support to prop my tottering steps.

Ah me! I feel very unwilling to announce to the King that a deputation of young hermits from the sage Kanwa has arrived, and craves an immediate audience. Certainly, his majesty ought not to neglect a matter of sacred duty, yet I hardly like to trouble him when he has just risen from the judgment-seat. Well, well; a monarch's business is to sustain the world, and he must not expect much repose; because—

Onward, for ever onward, in his car
The unwearied Sun pursues his daily course,
Nor tarries to unyoke his glittering steeds.
And ever moving speeds the rushing Wind
Through boundless space, filling the universe
With his life-giving breezes. Day and night,
The King of Serpents on his thousand heads[76]
Upholds the incumbent earth; and even so,
Unceasing toil is aye the lot of kings,
Who, in return, draw nurture from their subjects.

I will therefore deliver my message. [*Walking on and looking about.*] Ah! here comes the King:—

His subjects are his children; through the day,
Like a fond father, to supply their wants,
Incessantly he labours: wearied now,
The monarch seeks seclusion and repose:
E'en as the prince of elephants defies
The sun's fierce heat, and leads the fainting herd
To verdant pastures, ere his wayworn limbs
He yields to rest beneath the cooling shade.

[*Approaching.*] Victory to the King! So please your majesty, some hermits who live in a forest near the Snowy Mountains have arrived here, bringing certain women with them. They have a message to deliver from the sage Kanwa, and desire an audience. I await your majesty's commands.

KING. [*Respectfully.*

A message from the sage Kanwa, did you say?

CHAMBERLAIN.

Even so, my liege.

KING.

Tell my domestic priest Somaráta to receive the hermits with due honour, according to the prescribed form. He may

then himself introduce them into my presence. I will await them in a place suitable for the reception of such holy guests.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Your majesty's commands shall be obeyed. [*Exit.*

KING.

[*Rising and addressing the* WARDER.

Vetravatí, lead the way to the chamber of the consecrated fire.[77]

WARDER.

This way, sire.

KING.

[*Walking on, with the air of one oppressed by the cares of government.*

People are generally contented and happy when they have gained their desires; but kings have no sooner attained the object of their aspirations than all their troubles begin.

'Tis a fond thought that to attain the end
And object of ambition is to rest;
Success doth only mitigate the fever
Of anxious expectation; soon the fear

Of losing what we have, the constant care
Of guarding it, doth weary. Ceaseless toil
Must be the lot of him who with his hands
Supports the canopy that shields his subjects.

TWO HERALDS.[78] [*Behind the scenes*

May the King be victorious!

FIRST HERALD.

Honour to him who labours day by day
For the world's weal, forgetful of his own.
Like some tall tree that with its stately head
Endures the solar beam, while underneath
It yields refreshing shelter to the weary.

SECOND HERALD.

Let but the monarch wield his threatening rod
And e'en the guilty tremble; at his voice
The rebel spirit cowers; his grateful subjects
Acknowledge him their guardian; rich and poor
Hail him a faithful friend, a loving kinsman.

KING.

Weary as I was before, this complimentary address has refreshed me. [*Walks on.*

WARDER.

Here is the terrace of the hallowed fire-chamber, and yonder stands the cow that yields the milk for the oblations. The sacred enclosure has been recently purified, and looks clean and beautiful. Ascend, sire.

KING.

[*Leans on the shoulders of his attendants, and ascends.*

Vetravatí, what can possibly be the message that the venerable Kaṇwa has sent me by these hermits?—

Perchance their sacred rites have been disturbed
By demons, or some evil has befallen
The innocent herds, their favourites, that graze
Within the precincts of the hermitage;
Or haply, through my sins, some withering blight
Has nipped the creeping plants that spread their arms
Around the hallowed grove. Such troubled thoughts
Crowd through my mind, and fill me with misgiving.

WARDER.

If you ask my opinion, Sire, I think the hermits merely wish to take an opportunity of testifying their loyalty, and are therefore come to offer homage to your majesty.

Enter the HERMITS, *leading* ŚAKOONTALÁ, *attended by* GAUTAMÍ; *and, in advance of them, the* CHAMBERLAIN *and the* DOMESTIC PRIEST.

CHAMBERLAIN.

This way, reverend sirs, this way.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

O Śáradwata,

'Tis true the monarch lacks no royal grace,
Nor ever swerves from justice; true, his people,
Yea such as in life's humblest walks are found,
Refrain from evil courses; still to me,
A lonely hermit reared in solitude,
This throng appears bewildering, and methinks
I look upon a burning house, whose inmates
Are running to and fro in wild dismay.

ŚÁRADWATA.

It is natural that the first sight of the King's capital should affect you in this manner; my own sensations are very similar.

As one just bathed beholds the man polluted;
As one late purified, the yet impure:

As one awake looks on the yet unwakened;
Or as the freeman gazes on the thrall,
So I regard this crowd of pleasure-seekers.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Feeling a quivering sensation in her right eye-lid,*[79] *and suspecting a bad omen.*

Alas! what means this throbbing of my right eye-lid?

GAUTAMÍ.

Heaven avert the evil omen, my child! May the guardian deities of thy husband's family convert it into a sign of good fortune! [*Walks on.*

PRIEST. [*Pointing to the* KING.

Most reverend sirs, there stands the protector of the four classes of the people; the guardian of the four orders of the priesthood.[80] He has just left the judgment-seat, and is waiting for you. Behold him!

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Great Bráhman, we are happy in thinking that the King's power is exerted for the protection of all classes of his subjects. We have not come as petitioners—we have the fullest confidence in the generosity of his nature.

The loftiest trees bend humbly to the ground
Beneath the teeming burden of their fruit;
High in the vernal sky the pregnant clouds
Suspend their stately course, and hanging low,
Scatter their sparkling treasures o'er the earth:
And such is true benevolence; the good
Are never rendered arrogant by riches.

WARDER.

So please your majesty, I judge from the placid countenance of the hermits that they have no alarming message to deliver.

KING. [*Looking at* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

But the lady there—

Who can she be, whose form of matchless grace
Is half concealed beneath her flowing veil?
Among the sombre hermits she appears
Like a fresh bud 'mid sear and yellow leaves.

WARDER.

So please your majesty, my curiosity is also roused, but no conjecture occurs to my mind. This at least is certain, that she deserves to be looked at more closely.

KING.

True; but it is not right to gaze at another man's wife.[120]

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Placing her hand on her bosom. Aside.*

O my heart, why this throbbing? Remember thy lord's affection, and take courage.

PRIEST. [*Advancing.*

These holy men have been received with all due honour. One of them has now a message to deliver from his spiritual superior. Will your majesty deign to hear it?

KING.

I am all attention.

HERMITS. [*Extending their hands.*

Victory to the King!

KING.

Accept my respectful greeting.

HERMITS.

May the desires of your soul be accomplished!

KING.

I trust no one is molesting you in the prosecution of your religious rites.

LIBRARY

HERMITS.

Who dares disturb our penitential rites
When thou art our protector? Can the night
Prevail to cast her shadows o'er the earth
While the sun's beams irradiate the sky?

KING.

Such, indeed, is the very meaning of my title—'Defender of the Just.' I trust the venerable Kanwa is in good health. The world is interested in his well-being.

HERMITS.

Holy men have health and prosperity in their own power. He bade us greet your majesty, and, after kind inquiries, deliver this message.

KING.

Let me hear his commands.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

He bade us say that he feels happy in giving his sanction to the marriage which your Majesty contracted with this lady, his daughter, privately and by mutual agreement. Because

By us thou art esteemed the most illustrious
Of noble husbands; and Śakoontalá
Virtue herself in human form revealed.

Great Brahmá hath in equal yoke united
A bride unto a husband worthy of her:—
Henceforth let none make blasphemous complaint
That he is pleased with ill-assorted unions.[81]

Since, therefore, she expects soon to be the mother of thy child, receive her into thy palace, that she may perform, in conjunction with thee, the ceremonies prescribed by religion on such an occasion.

GAUTAMÍ.

So please your majesty, I would add a few words: but why should I intrude my sentiments when an opportunity of speaking my mind has never been allowed me?

She took no counsel with her kindred; thou
Didst not confer with thine, but all alone
Didst solemnize thy nuptials with thy wife.
Together, then, hold converse; let us leave you.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

Ah! how I tremble for my lord's reply.

KING.

What strange proposal is this?

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

His words are fire to me.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

What do I hear? Dost thou, then, hesitate? Monarch, thou art well acquainted with the ways of the world, and knowest that

A wife, however virtuous and discreet,
If she live separate from her wedded lord,
Though under shelter of her parent's roof,
Is mark for vile suspicion. Let her dwell
Beside her husband, though he hold her not
In his affection. So her kinsmen will it.

KING.

Do you really mean to assert that I ever married this lady?

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Despondingly. Aside.*

O my heart, thy worst misgivings are confirmed.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Is it becoming in a monarch to depart from the rules of justice, because he repents of his engagements?

KING.

I cannot answer a question which is based on a mere fabrication.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Such inconstancy is fortunately not common, excepting in men intoxicated by power.

KING.

Is that remark aimed at me?

GAUTAMÍ.

Be not ashamed, my daughter. Let me remove thy veil for a little space. Thy husband will then recognize thee.

[*Removes her veil.*

KING.

[*Gazing at* ŚAKOONTALA. *Aside.*

What charms are here revealed before mine eyes!
Truly no blemish mars the symmetry
Of that fair form; yet can I ne'er believe
She is my wedded wife; and like a bee
That circles round the flower whose nectared cup
Teems with the dew of morning, I must pause
Ere eagerly I taste the proffered sweetness.

[*Remains wrapped in thought.*

WARDER.

How admirably does our royal master's behaviour prove his regard for justice! Who else would hesitate for a moment

when good fortune offered for his acceptance a form of such rare beauty?

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Great King, why art thou silent?

KING.

Holy men, I have revolved the matter in my mind; but the more I think of it, the less able am I to recollect that I ever contracted an alliance with this lady. What answer, then, can I possibly give you when I do not believe myself to be her husband, and I plainly see that she is soon to become a mother?

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

Woe! woe! Is our very marriage to be called in question by my own husband? Ah me! is this to be the end of all my bright visions of wedded happiness?

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Beware!

Beware how thou insult the holy Sage!
Remember how he generously allowed
Thy secret union with his foster-child:
And how, when thou didst rob him of his treasure,

He sought to furnish thee excuse, when rather
He should have cursed thee for a ravisher.

ŚÁRADWATA.

Śárngarava, speak to him no more. Śakoontalá, our part is performed; we have said all we had to say, and the King has replied in the manner thou hast heard. It is now thy turn to give him convincing evidence of thy marriage.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

Since his feeling towards me has undergone a complete revolution, what will it avail to revive old recollections? One thing is clear—I shall soon have to mourn my own widowhood. [*Aloud.*] My revered husband—— [*Stops short.*] But no—I dare not address thee by this title, since thou hast refused to acknowledge our union. Noble descendant of Puru! It is not worthy of thee to betray an innocent-minded girl, and disown her in such terms, after having so lately and so solemnly plighted thy vows to her in the hermitage.

KING. [*Stopping his ears.*

I will hear no more. Be such a crime far from my thoughts!

What evil spirit can possess thee, lady,
That thou dost seek to sully my good name
By base aspersions? like a swollen torrent,
That, leaping from its narrow bed, o'erthrows
The tree upon its bank, and strives to blend
Its turbid waters with the crystal stream?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

If, then, thou really believest me to be the wife of another, and thy present conduct proceeds from some cloud that obscures thy recollection, I will easily convince thee by this token.

KING.

An excellent idea!

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Feeling for the ring.*

Alas! alas! woe is me! There is no ring on my finger!

[*Looks with anguish at* GAUTAMÍ.

GAUTAMÍ.

The ring must have slipped off when thou wast in the act of offering homage to the holy water of Śachí's sacred pool, near Śakrávatára.[82]

KING. [*Smiling.*

People may well talk of the readiness of woman's invention! Here is an instance of it.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Say, rather, of the omnipotence of fate. I will mention another circumstance, which may yet convince thee.

KING.

By all means let me hear it at once.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

One day, while we were seated in a jasmine bower, thou didst pour into the hollow of thine hand some water, sprinkled by a recent shower in the cup of a lotus-blossom——

KING.

I am listening; proceed.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

At that instant, my adopted child, the little fawn, with soft, long eyes, came running towards us. Upon which, before tasting the water thyself, thou didst kindly offer some to the little creature, saying fondly—'Drink first, gentle fawn.' But she could not be induced to drink from the hand of a stranger; though immediately afterwards, when I took the water in my own hand, she drank with perfect confidence. Then, with a smile, thou didst say—'Every

creature confides naturally in its own kind. You are both inhabitants of the same forest, and have learnt to trust each other.'

KING.

Voluptuaries may allow themselves to be seduced from the path of duty by falsehoods such as these, expressed in honeyed words.

GAUTAMÍ.

Speak not thus, illustrious Prince. This lady was brought up in a hermitage, and has never learnt deceit.

KING.

Holy matron,

E'en in untutored brutes, the female sex
Is marked by inborn subtlety—much more
In beings gifted with intelligence.
The wily Köil,[83] ere towards the sky
She wings her sportive flight, commits her eggs
To other nests, and artfully consigns
The rearing of her little ones to strangers.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Angrily.*

Dishonourable man, thou judgest of others by thine own

evil heart. Thou, at least, art unrivalled in perfidy, and standest alone—a base deceiver in the garb of virtue and religion—like a deep pit whose yawning mouth is concealed by smiling flowers.

KING. [*Aside.*

Her anger, at any rate, appears genuine, and makes me almost doubt whether I am in the right. For, indeed,

When I had vainly searched my memory,
And so with stern severity denied
The fabled story of our secret loves,
Her brows, that met before in graceful curves,
Like the arched weapon of the god of love,
Seemed by her frown dissevered; while the fire
Of sudden anger kindled in her eyes.

[*Aloud.*] My good lady, Dushyanta's character is well known to all. I comprehend not your meaning.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Well do I deserve to be thought a harlot for having, in the innocence of my heart, and out of the confidence I reposed in a Prince of Puru's race, entrusted my honour to a man whose mouth distils honey, while his heart is full of poison.

[*Covers her face with her mantle, and bursts into tears.*

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Thus is it that burning remorse must ever follow rash actions which might have been avoided, and for which one has only one's-self to blame.

Not hastily should marriage be contracted,
And specially in secret. Many a time,
In hearts that know not each the other's fancies,
Fond love is changed into most bitter hate.

KING.

How now! Do you give credence to this woman rather than to me, that you heap such accusations on me?

ŚÁRNGARAVA. [*Sarcastically.*

That would be too absurd, certainly. You have heard the proverb—

Hold in contempt the innocent words of those
Who from their infancy have known no guile:
But trust the treacherous counsels of the man
Who makes a very science of deceit.

KING.

Most veracious Bráhman, grant that you are in the right, what end would be gained by betraying this lady?

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Ruin.

KING.

No one will believe that a Prince of Puru's race would seek to ruin others or himself.

ŚÁRADWATA.

This altercation is idle, Śárngarava. We have executed the commission of our preceptor; come let us return.

[*To the* KING.

Śakoontalá is certainly thy bride;
Receive her or reject her, she is thine.
Do with her, King, according to thy pleasure—
The husband o'er the wife is absolute.

Go on before us, Gautamí. [*They move away.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

What! is it not enough to have been betrayed by this perfidious man? Must you also forsake me, regardless of my tears and lamentations? [*Attempts to follow them.*

GAUTAMÍ. [*Stopping.*

My son Śárngarava, see, Śakoontalá is following us, and with tears implores us not to leave her. Alas! poor child,

what will she do here with a cruel husband who casts her from him?

SÁRNGARAVA.

[*Turning angrily towards her.*

Wilful woman, dost thou seek to be independent of thy lord? [ŚAKOONTALÁ *trembles with fear.*

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Sakoontalá!

If thou art really what the King proclaims thee,
How can thy father e'er receive thee back
Into his house and home? but, if thy conscience
Be witness to thy purity of soul,
E'en should thy husband to a handmaid's lot
Condemn thee, thou mayst cheerfully endure it,
When ranked among the number of his household.

Thy duty, therefore, is to stay. As for us, we must return immediately.

KING.

Deceive not the lady, my good hermit, by any such expectations.

The moon expands the lotus of the night,
The rising sun awakes the lily; each

Is with his own contented. Even so
The virtuous man is master of his passions,
And from another's wife averts his gaze.[120]

ŚÁRNGARAVA.

Since thy union with another woman has rendered thee oblivious of thy marriage with Śakoontalá, whence this fear of losing thy character for constancy and virtue.

KING. [*To his* PRIEST.

You must counsel me, revered sir, as to my course of action. Which of the two evils involves the greater or less sin?

Whether by some dark veil my mind be clouded,
Or this designing woman speak untruly,
I know not. Tell me, must I rather be
The base disowner of my wedded wife,
Or the defiling and defiled adulterer?

PRIEST. [*After deliberation.*

You must take an intermediate course.

KING.

What course, revered sir? Tell me at once.

PRIEST.

I will provide an asylum for the lady in my own house until the birth of her child; and my reason, if you ask me, is this. Soothsayers have predicted that your first-born will have universal dominion. Now, if the hermit's daughter bring forth a son with the discus or mark of empire in the lines of his hand,[84] you must admit her immediately into your royal apartments with great rejoicings; if not, then determine to send her back as soon as possible to her father.

KING.

I bow to the decision of my spiritual adviser.

PRIEST.

Daughter, follow me.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

O divine earth, open and receive me into thy bosom!

[*Exit* ŚAKOONTALÁ *weeping, with the* PRIEST *and the* HERMITS. *The* KING *remains absorbed in thinking of her, though the curse still clouds his recollection.*

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

A miracle! a miracle!

KING. [*Listening.*

What has happened now?

PRIEST.

[*Entering with an air of astonishment.*

Great Prince, a stupendous prodigy has just occurred!

KING.

What is it?

PRIEST.

May it please your majesty, so soon as Kanwa's pupils had departed,

Śakoontalá, her eyes all bathed in tears,
With outstretched arms bewailed her cruel fate——

KING.

Well, well, what happened then?

PRIEST.

When suddenly a shining apparition,
In female shape, descended from the skies,
Near the nymphs pool, and bore her up to heaven.

[*All remain motionless with astonishment.*

KING.

My good priest, from the very first I declined having anything to do with this matter. It is now all over, and we

can never, by our conjectures, unravel the mystery; let it rest; go, seek repose.

PRIEST. [*Looking at the* KING.

Be it so. Victory to the King! [*Exit.*

KING.

Vetravatí, I am tired out; lead the way to the bed-chamber.

WARDER.

This way, sire. [*They move away.*

KING.

Do what I will, I cannot call to mind
That I did e'er espouse the sage's daughter:
Therefore I have disowned her; yet 'tis strange
How painfully my agitated heart
Bears witness to the truth of her assertion,
And makes me credit her against my judgment.

[*Exeunt.*

PRELUDE TO ACT VI.

SCENE—*A Street.*

Enter the King's brother-in-law as SUPERINTENDENT *of the city police; and with him* TWO CONSTABLES, *dragging a poor* FISHERMAN, *who has his hands tied behind his back.*

BOTH THE CONSTABLES.

[*Striking the prisoner.*

Take that for a rascally thief that you are; and now tell us, sirrah, where you found this ring—aye, the King's own signet-ring. See, here is the royal name engraved on the setting of the jewel.

FISHERMAN. [*With a gesture of alarm.*

Mercy! kind sirs, mercy! I did not steal it; indeed I did not.

FIRST CONSTABLE.

Oh! then I suppose the King took you for some fine Bráhman, and made you a present of it?

FISHERMAN.

Only hear me. I am but a poor fisherman, living at Sakrávatára——

SECOND CONSTABLE.

Scoundrel, who ever asked you, pray, for a history of your birth and parentage?

SUPERINTENDENT.

[*To one of the* CONSTABLES.

Súchaka, let the fellow tell his own story from the beginning. Don't interrupt him.

BOTH CONSTABLES.

As you please, master. Go on, then, sirrah, and say what you've got to say.

FISHERMAN.

You see in me a poor man, who supports his family by catching fish with nets, hooks, and the like.

SUPERINTENDENT, [*Laughing.*

A most refined occupation, certainly! [85]

FISHERMAN.

Blame me not for it, master.

The father's occupation, though despised
By others, casts no shame upon the son,

And he should not forsake it.[86] Is the priest
Who kills the animal for sacrifice
Therefore deemed cruel? Sure a low-born man
May, though a fisherman, be tender-hearted.

SUPERINTENDENT.

Well, well; go on with your story.

FISHERMAN.

One day I was cutting open a large carp[87] I had just hooked, when the sparkle of a jewel caught my eye, and what should I find in the fish's maw but that ring! Soon afterwards, when I was offering it for sale, I was seized by your honours. Now you know everything. Whether you kill me, or whether you let me go, this is the true account of how the ring came into my possession.

SUPERINTENDENT.

[*To one of the* CONSTABLES.

Well, Jánuka, the rascal emits such a fishy odour that I have no doubt of his being a fisherman; but we must inquire a little more closely into this queer story about the finding of the ring. Come, we'll take him before the King's household.

BOTH CONSTABLES.

Very good, master. Get on with you, you cutpurse.

[*All move on.*

SUPERINTENDENT.

Now attend, Súchaka; keep you guard here at the gate; and hark ye, sirrahs, take good care your prisoner does not escape, while I go in and lay the whole story of the discovery of this ring before the king in person. I will soon return and let you know his commands.

CONSTABLE.

Go in, master, by all means; and may you find favour in the king's sight! [*Exit* SUPERINTENDENT.

FIRST CONSTABLE. [*After an interval.*

I say, Jánuka, the Superintendent is a long time away.

SECOND CONSTABLE.

Aye, aye; kings are not to be got at so easily. Folks must bide the proper opportunity.

FIRST CONSTABLE.

Jánuka, my fingers itch to strike the first blow at this royal victim here. We must kill him with all the honours, you know. I long to begin binding the flowers round his head.[88] [*Pretends to strike a blow at the* FISHERMAN.

FISHERMAN.

Your honour surely will not put an innocent man to a cruel death.

SECOND CONSTABLE. [*Looking.*

There's our Superintendent at last, I declare. See he is coming towards us with a paper in his hand. We shall soon know the king's command; so prepare, my fine fellow, either to become food for the vultures, or to make acquaintance with some hungry cur.

SUPERINTENDENT. [*Entering.*

Ho, there, Súchaka! set the fisherman at liberty, I tell you. His story about the ring is all correct.

SÚCHAKA.

Oh! very good, sir; as you please.

SECOND CONSTABLE.

The fellow had one foot in hell, and now here he is in the land of the living. [*Releases him.*

FISHERMAN.

[*Bowing to the* SUPERINTENDENT.

Now, master, what think you of my way of getting a livelihood?

SUPERINTENDENT.

Here my good man, the king desired me to present you

with this purse. It contains a sum of money equal to the full value of the ring. [*Gives him the money.*

FISHERMAN. [*Taking it and bowing.*

His majesty does me too great honour.

SÚCHAKA.

You may well say so. He might has well have taken you from the gallows to seat you on his state elephant.

JÁNUKA.

Master, the king must value the ring very highly, or he would never have sent such a sum of money to this ragamuffin.

SUPERINTENDENT.

I don't think he prizes it as a costly jewel so much as a memorial of some person he tenderly loves. The moment it was shown to him he became much agitated, though in general he conceals his feelings.

SÚCHAKA.

Then you must have done a great service——

JÁNUKA.

Yes, to this husband of a fish-wife.

[*Looks enviously at the* FISHERMAN.

FISHERMAN.

Here's half the money for you, my masters. It will serve

to purchase the flowers you spoke of, if not to buy me your good-will.

JÁNUKA.

Well, now, that's just as it should be.

SUPERINTENDENT.

My good fisherman, you are an excellent fellow, and I begin to feel quite a regard for you. Let us seal our first friendship over a glass of good liquor. Come along to the next wine-shop and we'll drink your health.

ALL.

By all means.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT VI.

SCENE—*The Garden of the Palace.*

The nymph SÁNUMATÍ *is seen descending in a celestial car.*

SÁNUMATÍ.

Behold me just arrived from attending in my proper turn at the nymphs' pool, where I have left the other nymphs to perform their ablutions, whilst I seek to ascertain, with my own eyes, how it fares with King Dushyanta. My connexion with the nymph Menaká has made her daughter Śakoontalá dearer to me than my own flesh and blood; and Menaká it was who charged me with this errand on her daughter's behalf. [*Looking round in all directions.*] How is it that I see no preparations in the king's household for celebrating the great vernal festival?[89] I could easily discover the reason by my divine faculty of meditation;[134] but respect must be shown to the wishes of my friend. How then shall I arrive at the truth? I know what I will do.

I will become invisible, and place myself near those two maidens who are tending the plants in the garden.

[*Descends and takes her station.*

Enter a MAIDEN, *who stops in front of a mango-tree and gazes at the blossom. Another* MAIDEN *is seen behind her.*

FIRST MAIDEN.

Hail to thee, lovely harbinger of spring!
The varied radiance of thy opening flowers
Is welcome to my sight. I bid thee hail,
Sweet mango, soul of this enchanting season.

SECOND MAIDEN.

Parabhṛitiká, what are you saying there to yourself?

FIRST MAIDEN.

Dear Madhukariká, am I not named after the Koïl?[90] and does not the Koïl sing for joy at the first appearance of the mango-blossom?

SECOND MAIDEN.

[*Approaching hastily, with transport.*

What! is spring really come?

FIRST MAIDEN.

Yes, indeed, Madhukariká, and with it the season of joy love, and song.

SECOND MAIDEN.

Let me lean upon you, dear, while I stand on tip-toe and pluck a blossom of the mango, that I may present it as an offering to the god of love.

FIRST MAIDEN.

Provided you let me have half the reward which the god will bestow in return.

SECOND MAIDEN.

To be sure you shall, and that without asking. Are we not one in heart and soul, though divided in body? [*Leans on her friend and plucks a mango-blossom.*] Ah! here is a bud just bursting into flower. It diffuses a delicious perfume, though not yet quite expanded. [*Joining her hands reverentially.*

God of the bow, who with spring's choicest flowers
Dost point thy five unerring shafts;[91] to thee
I dedicate this blossom; let it serve
To barb thy truest arrow; be its mark
Some youthful heart that pines to be beloved.

[*Throws down a mango-blossom.*

CHAMBERLAIN.

[*Entering in a hurried manner, angrily.*

Hold there, thoughtless woman. What are you about,

breaking off those mango-blossoms, when the king has forbidden the celebration of the spring festival?

BOTH MAIDENS. [*Alarmed.*

Pardon us, kind sir, we have heard nothing of it.

CHAMBERLAIN.

You have heard nothing of it? Why all the vernal plants and shrubs, and the very birds that lodge in their branches, show more respect to the king's order than you do.

Yon mango-blossoms, though long since expanded,
Gather no down upon their tender crests;
The flower still lingers in the amaranth,[92]
Imprisoned in its bud; the tuneful Koïl,
Though winter's chilly dews be overpast,
Suspends the liquid volume of his song
Scarce uttered in his throat; e'en Love, dismayed,
Restores the half-drawn arrow to his quiver.

BOTH MAIDENS.

The mighty power of King Dushyanta is not to be disputed.

FIRST MAIDEN.

It is but a few days since Mitrávasu, the king's brother-in-law, sent us to wait upon his majesty; and, during the

whole of our sojourn here, we have been entrusted with the charge of the royal pleasure-grounds. We are therefore strangers in this place, and heard nothing of the order till you informed us of it.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Well then, now you know it, take care you don't continue your preparations.

BOTH MAIDENS.

But tell us, kind sir, why has the king prohibited the usual festivities? We are curious to hear, if we may.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

Men are naturally fond of festive entertainments. There must be some good reason for the prohibition.

CHAMBERLAIN.

The whole affair is now public; why should I not speak of it! Has not the gossip about the king's rejection of Śakoontalá reached your ears yet?

BOTH MAIDENS.

Oh yes, we heard the story from the king's brother-in-law, as far, at least, as the discovery of the ring.

CHAMBERLAIN.

Then there is little more to tell you. As soon as the king's memory was restored by the sight of his own ring, he exclaimed, 'Yes, it is all true. I remember now my secret marriage with Śakoontalá. When I repudiated her, I had lost my recollection.' Ever since that moment, he has yielded himself a prey to the bitterest remorse.

He loathes his former pleasures; he rejects
The daily homage of his ministers.
On his lone couch he tosses to and fro,
Courting repose in vain. Whene'er he meets
The ladies of his palace, and would fain
Address them with politeness, he confounds
Their names; or, calling them 'Śakoontalá,'
Is straightway silent and abashed with shame.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

To me this account is delightful.

CHAMBERLAIN.

In short, the king is so completely out of his mind that the festival has been prohibited.

BOTH MAIDENS.

Perfectly right.

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

The king! the king! This way, sire, this way.

CHAMBERLAIN. [*Listening.*

Oh! here comes his majesty in this direction. Pass on, maidens; attend to your duties.

BOTH MAIDENS.

We will, sir. [*Exeunt.*

Enter King DUSHYANTA, *dressed in deep mourning, attended by his Jester,* MÁṬHAVYA, *and preceded by* VETRAVATÍ.

CHAMBERLAIN. [*Gazing at the* KING.

Well, noble forms are certainly pleasing, under all varieties of outward circumstances. The King's person is as charming as ever, notwithstanding his sorrow of mind.

Though but a single golden bracelet spans
His wasted arm; though costly ornaments
Have given place to penitential weeds;
Though oft-repeated sighs have blanched his lips,
And robbed them of their bloom; though sleepless care
And carking thought have dimmed his beaming eye;

Yet does his form, by its inherent lustre,
Dazzle the gaze; and, like a priceless gem
Committed to some cunning polisher,
Grow more effulgent by the loss of substance.

SÁNUMATÍ.

[*Aside. Looking at the* KING.

Now that I have seen him, I can well understand why Śakoontalá should pine after such a man, in spite of his disdainful rejection of her.

KING.

[*Walking slowly up and down in deep thought.*

When fatal lethargy o'erwhelmed my soul,
My loved one strove to rouse me, but in vain:
And now when I would fain in slumber deep
Forget myself, full soon remorse doth wake me.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

My poor Śakoontalá's sufferings are very similar.

MÁṬHAVYA. [*Aside.*

He is taken with another attack of this odious Śakoontalá fever. How shall we ever cure him?

CHAMBERLAIN. [*Approaching.*

Victory to the King! Great Prince, the royal pleasure-grounds have been put in order. Your majesty can resort to them for exercise and amusement whenever you think proper.

KING.

Vetravatí, tell the worthy Piśuna, my prime minister, from me, that I am so exhausted by want of sleep that I cannot sit on the judgment-seat to-day. If any case of importance be brought before the tribunal he must give it his best attention, and inform me of the circumstances by letter.

VETRAVATÍ.

Your majesty's commands shall be obeyed. [*Exit.*

KING. [*To the* CHAMBERLAIN.

And you, Vátáyana, may go about your own affairs.

CHAMBERLAIN.

I will, Sire. [*Exit.*

MÁṬHAVYA.

Now that you have rid yourself of these troublesome fellows, you can enjoy the delightful coolness of your pleasure-grounds without interruption.

KING.

Ah! my dear friend, there is an old adage—'When affliction has a mind to enter, she will find a crevice somewhere'; and it is verified in me.

Scarce is my soul delivered from the cloud
That darkened its remembrance of the past,
When lo! the heart-born deity of love
With yonder blossom of the mango barbs
His keenest shaft, and aims it at my breast.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Well, then, wait a moment; I will soon demolish Master Káma's[47] arrow with a cut of my cane.

[*Raises his stick and strikes off the mango-blossom.*

KING. [*Smiling.*

That will do. I see very well the god of Love is not a match for a Bráhman. And now, my dear friend, where shall I sit down, that I may enchant my sight by gazing on the twining plants, which seem to remind me of the graceful shape of my beloved?

MÁṬHAVYA.

Do not you remember? you told your personal attendant,

Chaturiká, you should pass the heat of the day in the jasmine bower; and commanded her to bring the likeness of your queen Śakoontalá, sketched with your own hand.

KING.

True. The sight of her picture will refresh my soul. Lead the way to the arbour.

MÁṬHAVYA.

This way, sire.

[*Both move on, followed by* ŚÁNUMATÍ.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Here we are at the jasmine-bower. Look, it has a marble seat, and seems to bid us welcome with its offerings of delicious flowers. You have only to enter and sit down.

[*Both enter and seat themselves.*

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

I will lean against these young jasmines. I can easily, from behind them, glance at my friend's picture, and will then hasten to inform her of her husband's ardent affection.

[*Stands leaning against the creepers.*

KING.

Oh! my dear friend, how vividly all the circumstances of my union with Śakoontalá present themselves to my

recollection at this moment! But tell me now how it was that, between the time of my leaving her in the hermitage and my subsequent rejection of her, you never breathed her name to me? True, you were not by my side when I disowned her; but I had confided to you the story of my love and you were acquainted with every particular. Did it pass out of your mind as it did out of mine?

MÁṬHAVYA.

No, no; trust me for that. But, if you remember, when you had finished telling me about it, you added that I was not to take the story in earnest, for that you were not really in love with a country girl, but were only jesting; and I was dull and thick-headed enough to believe you. But so fate decreed, and there is no help for it.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

Exactly.

KING. [*After deep thought.*

My dear friend, suggest some relief for my misery.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Come, come, cheer up; why do you give way? Such weakness is unworthy of you. Great men never surrender

themselves to uncontrolled grief. Do not mountains remain unshaken even in a gale of wind?

KING.

How can I be otherwise than inconsolable, when I call to mind the agonised demeanour of the dear one on the occasion of my disowning her?

When cruelly I spurned her from my presence,
She fain had left me; but the young recluse,
Stern as the Sage, and with authority
As from his saintly master, in a voice
That brooked not contradiction, bade her stay.
Then through her pleading eyes, bedimmed with tears,
She cast on me one long reproachful look,
Which like a poisoned shaft torments me still.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

Alas! such is the force of self-reproach following a rash action. But his anguish only rejoices me.

MÁTHAVYA.

An idea has just struck me. I should not wonder if some celestial being had carried her off to heaven.

KING.

Very likely. Who else would have dared to lay a finger on a wife, the idol of her husband? It is said that Menaká, the nymph of heaven gave her birth. The suspicion has certainly crossed my mind that some of her celestial companions may have taken her to their own abode.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

His present recollection of every circumstance of her history does not surprise me so much as his former forgetfulness.

MÁṬHAVYA.

If that's the case, you will be certain to meet her before long.

KING.

Why?

MÁṬHAVYA.

No father and mother can endure to see a daughter suffering the pain of separation from her husband.

KING.

Oh! my dear Máṭhavya,

Was it a dream? or did some magic dire,
Dulling my senses with a strange delusion,

O'ercome my spirit? or did destiny,
Jealous of my good actions, mar their fruit,
And rob me of their guerdon? It is past,
Whate'er the spell that bound me. Once again
Am I awake, but only to behold
The precipice o'er which my hopes have fallen.

MÁṬHVAYA.

Do not despair in this manner. Is not this very ring a proof that what has been lost may be unexpectedly found?

KING. [*Gazing at the ring.*

Ah! this ring, too, has fallen from a station which it will not easily regain, and deserves all my sympathy.

O gem, deserved the punishment we suffer,
And equal is the merit of our works,
When such our common doom. Thou didst enjoy
The thrilling contact of those slender fingers,
Bright as the dawn; and now how changed thy lot!

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

Had it found its way to the hand of any other person, then indeed its fate would have been deplorable.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Pray, how did the ring ever come upon her hand at all?

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside*

I myself am curious to know.

KING.

You shall hear. When I was leaving my beloved Śakoontalá that I might return to my own capital, she said to me, with tears in her eyes, 'How long will it be ere my lord send for me to his palace and make me his queen?'

MÁṬHAVYA.

Well, what was your reply?

KING.

Then I placed the ring on her finger, and thus addressed her—

Repeat each day one letter of the name
Engraven on this gem; ere thou hast reckoned
The tale of syllables, my minister
Shall come to lead thee to thy husband's palace.

But, hard-hearted man that I was, I forgot to fulfil my promise, owing to the infatuation that took possession of me.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

A pleasant arrangement! Fate, however, ordained that the appointment should not be kept.

MÁTHAVYA.

But how did the ring contrive to pass into the stomach of that carp which the fisherman caught and was cutting up?

KING.

It must have slipped from my Śakoontalá's hand, and fallen into the stream of the Ganges, while she was offering homage to the water of Śachí's holy pool.

MÁTHAVYA.

Very likely.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

Hence it happened, I suppose, that the king, always fearful of committing the least injustice, came to doubt his marriage with my poor Śakoontalá. But why should affection so strong as his stand in need of any token of recognition?

KING.

Let me now address a few words of reproof to this ring.

MÁTHAVYA. [*Aside.*

He is going stark mad, I verily believe.

KING.

Hear me, thou dull and undiscerning bauble!
For so it argues thee, that thou couldst leave
The slender fingers of her hand, to sink
Beneath the waters. Yet what marvel is it
That thou shouldst lack discernment? let me rather
Heap curses on myself, who, though endowed
With reason, yet rejected her I loved.

MÁṬHAVYA. [*Aside.*

And so, I suppose, I must stand here to be devoured by hunger, whilst he goes on in this sentimental strain.

KING.

O forsaken one, unjustly banished from my presence, take pity on thy slave, whose heart is consumed by the fire of remorse, and return to my sight.

Enter CHATURIKÁ *hurriedly, with a picture in her hand.*

CHATURIKÁ.

Here is the Queen's portrait. [*Shows the picture.*

MÁṬHAVYA.

Excellent, my dear friend, excellent! The imitation of nature is perfect, and the attitude of the figures is really

charming. They stand out in such bold relief that the eye is quite deceived.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

A most artistic performance! I admire the king's skill, and could almost believe that Śakoontalá herself was before me.

KING.

I own 'tis not amiss, though it pourtrays
But feebly her angelic loveliness.
Aught less than perfect is depicted falsely,
And fancy must supply the imperfection.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

A very just remark from a modest man, whose affection is exaggerated by the keenness of his remorse.

MÁṬHAVYA.

Tell me,—I see three female figures drawn on the canvas, and all of them beautiful; which of the three is her majesty, Śakoontalá?

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

If he cannot distinguish her from the others, the simpleton might as well have no eyes in his head.

KING.

Which should you imagine to be intended for her?

MÁTHAVYA.

She who is leaning, apparently a little tired, against the stem of that mango-tree, the tender leaves of which glitter with the water she has poured upon them. Her arms are gracefully extended; her face is somewhat flushed with the heat; and a few flowers have escaped from her hair, which has become unfastened, and hangs in loose tresses about her neck. That must be the queen Śakoontalá, and the others, I presume, are her two attendants.

KING.

I congratulate you on your discernment. Behold the proof of my passion;

My finger, burning with the glow of love,[93]
Has left its impress on the painted tablet;
While here and there, alas! a scalding tear
Has fallen on the cheek and dimmed its brightness.

Chaturiká, the garden in the back-ground of the picture is only half-painted. Go, fetch the brush that I may finish it.

CHATURIKÁ.

Worthy Máṭhavya, have the kindness to hold the picture until I return.

KING.

Nay, I will hold it myself. [*Takes the picture.*

[*Exit* CHATURIKÁ.

KING.

My loved one came but lately to my presence
And offered me herself, but in my folly
I spurned the gift, and now I fondly cling
To her mere image; even as a madman
Would pass the waters of the gushing stream,
And thirst for airy vapours of the desert.[94]

MÁTHAVYA. [*Aside.*

He has been fool enough to forego the reality for the semblance, the substance for the shadow. [*Aloud.*] Tell us, I pray, what else remains to be painted.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

He longs, no doubt, to delineate some favourite spot where my dear Śakoontalá delighted to ramble.

KING.

You shall hear—

I wish to see the Máliní pourtrayed,
Its tranquil course by banks of sand impeded:
Upon the brink a pair of swans: beyond,
The hills adjacent to Himálaya,[85]
Studded with deer; and, near the spreading shade
Of some large tree, where 'mid the branches hang
The hermits' vests of bark, a tender doe,
Rubbing its downy forehead on the horn
Of a black antelope, should be depicted.

MÁTHAVYA. [*Aside.*

Pooh! if I were he, I would fill up the vacant spaces with a lot of grizzly-bearded old hermits.

KING.

My dear Máṭhavya, there is still a part of Śakoontalá's dress which I purposed to draw, but find I have omitted.

MÁTHAVYA.

What is that?

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

Something suitable I suppose, to the simple attire of a young and beautiful girl dwelling in a forest.

KING.

A sweet Śirísha blossom should be twined
Behind her ear, its perfumed crest depending
Towards her cheek; and, resting on her bosom,
A lotus-fibre necklace, soft and bright
As an autumnal moon-beam, should be traced.

MATHAVYA.

Pray, why does the Queen cover her lips with the tips of her fingers, bright as the blossom of a lily, as if she were afraid of something? [*Looking more closely*]. Oh! I see; a vagabond bee, intent on thieving the honey of flowers, has mistaken her mouth for a rose-bud, and is trying to settle upon it.

KING.

A bee! drive off the impudent insect, will you?

MÁTHAVYA.

That's your business. Your royal prerogative gives you power over all offenders.

KING.

Very true. Listen to me, thou favourite guest of flowering plants; why give thyself the trouble of hovering here?

See where thy partner sits on yonder flower,
And waits for thee ere she will sip its dew.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

A most polite way of warning him off!

MÁTHAVYA.

You'll find the obstinate creature is not to be sent about his business so easily as you think.

KING.

Dost thou presume to disobey? Now hear me—
An thou but touch the lips of my beloved,
Sweet as the opening blossom, whence I quaffed
In happier days love's nectar, I will place thee
Within the hollow of yon lotus cup,
And there imprison thee for thy presumption.

MÁTHAVYA.

He must be bold indeed not to show any fear when you threaten him with such an awful punishment. [*Smiling, aside*]. He is stark mad, that's clear; and I believe, by keeping

him company, I am beginning to talk almost as wildly. [*Aloud*]. Look, it is only a painted bee.

KING.

Painted? impossible!

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

Even I did not perceive it; how much less should he!

KING.

Oh! my dear friend, why were you so ill-natured as to tell me the truth?

While, all entranced, I gazed upon her picture,
My loved one seemed to live before my eyes,
Till every fibre of my being thrilled
With rapturous emotion. Oh! 'twas cruel
To dissipate the day-dream, and transform
The blissful vision to a lifeless image.

[*Sheds tears.*

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

Separated lovers are very difficult to please; but he seems more difficult than usual.

KING.

Alas! my dear Máṭhavya, why am I doomed to be the victim of perpetual disappointment?

Vain is the hope of meeting her in dreams,
For slumber night by night forsakes my couch:
And now that I would fain assuage my grief
By gazing on her portrait here before me,
Tears of despairing love obscure my sight.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

You have made ample amends for the wrong you did Śakoontalá in disowning her.

CHATURIKÁ. [*Entering.*

Victory to the King! I was coming along with the box of colours in my hand——

KING.

What now?

CHATURIKÁ.

When I met the Queen Vasumatí, attended by Taraliká. She insisted on taking it from me, and declared she would herself deliver it into your Majesty's hands.

MÁTHAVYA.

By what luck did you to contrive to escape her?

CHATURIKÁ.

While her maid was disengaging her mantle, which had caught in the branch of a shrub, I ran away.

KING.

Here, my good friend, take the picture and conceal it. My attentions to the Queen have made her presumptuous. She will be here in a minute.

MÁTHAVYA.

Conceal the picture! conceal myself, you mean. [*Getting up and taking the picture*]. The Queen has a bitter draught in store for you, which you will have to swallow as Śiva did the poison at the Deluge.[96] When you are well quit of her, you may send and call me from the Palace of Clouds,[97] where I shall take refuge. [*Exit, running.*

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

Although the King's affections are transferred to another object, yet he respects his previous attachments. I fear his love must be somewhat fickle.

VETRAVATÍ.

[*Entering with a dispatch in her hand.*

Victory to the King!

KING.

Vetravatí, did you observe the Queen Vasumatí coming in his direction?

VETRAVATÍ.

I did; but when she saw that I had a despatch in my hand for your Majesty, she turned back.

KING.

The Queen has too much regard for propriety to interrupt me when I am engaged with state-affairs.

VETRAVATÍ.

So please your Majesty, your Prime Minister begs respectfully to inform you that he has devoted much time to the settlement of financial calculations, and only one case of importance has been submitted by the citizens for his consideration. He has made a written report of the facts, and requests your Majesty to cast your eyes over it.

KING.

Hand me the paper. [VETRAVATÍ *delivers it.*

KING. [*Reading.*

What have we here? 'A merchant named Dhanamitra, trading by sea, was lost in a late shipwreck. Though a wealthy trader, he was childless; and the whole of his immens[illegible]perty becomes by law forfeited to the king.' So w[illegible]ne minister. Alas! alas! for his childlessness!

But surely, if he was wealthy, he must have had many wives. Let an inquiry be made whether any one of them is expecting to give birth to a child.

VETRAVATÍ.

They say that his wife, the daughter of the foreman of a guild belonging to Ayodhyá[98] has just completed the ceremonies usual upon such expectations.

KING.

The unborn child has a title to his father's property. Such is my decree. Go, bid my minister proclaim it so.

VETRAVATÍ.

I will, my liege. [*Going.*

KING.

Stay a moment.

VETRAVATÍ.

I am at your Majesty's service.

KING.

Let there be no question whether he may or may not have left offspring;

Rather be it proclaimed that whosoe'er
Of King Dushyanta's subjects be bereaved

Of any loved relation, an it be not
That his estates are forfeited for crimes,
Dushyanta will himself to them supply
That kinsman's place in tenderest affection.

VETRAVATÍ.

It shall be so proclaimed.

[*Exit* VETRAVATÍ, *and re-enter after an interval.*

VETRAVATÍ.

Your Majesty's proclamation was received with acclamations of joy, like grateful rain at the right season.

KING. [*Drawing a deep sigh.*

So then, the property of rich men, who have no lineal descendants, passes over to a stranger at their decease. And such, alas! must be the fate of the fortunes of the race of Puru at my death; even as when fertile soil is sown with seed at the wrong season.

VETRAVATÍ.

Heaven forbid!

KING.

Fool that I was to reject such happiness when it offered itself for my acceptance!

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

He may well blame his own folly when he calls to mind his treatment of my beloved Śakoontalá.

KING.

Ah! woe is me! when I forsook my wife—
My lawful wife—concealed within her breast
There lay my second self, a child unborn,
Hope of my race, e'en as the choicest fruit
Lies hidden in the bosom of the earth.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

There is no fear of your race being cut off for want of a son.

CHATURIKÁ. [*Aside to* VETRAVATÍ.

The affair of the merchant's death has quite upset our royal master, and caused him sad distress. Had you not better fetch the worthy Máṭhavya from the Palace of Clouds to comfort him?

VETRAVATÍ.

A very good idea. [*Exit.*

KING.

Alas! the shades of my forefathers are even now beginning

to be alarmed, lest at my death they may be deprived of their funeral libations.

No son remains in King Dushyanta's place
To offer sacred homage to the dead
Of Puru's noble line: my ancestors
Must drink these glistening tears, the last libation[99]
A childless man can ever hope to make them.

[*Falls down in an agony of grief.*

CHATURIKÁ.

[*Looking at him in consternation.*

Great King, compose yourself.

SÁNUMATÍ. [*Aside.*

Alas! alas! though a bright light is shining near him, he is involved in the blackest darkness, by reason of the veil that obscures his sight. I will now reveal all, and put an end to his misery. But no; I heard the mother of the great Indra,[100] when she was consoling Śakoontalá, say, that the gods will soon bring about a joyful union between husband and wife, being eager for the sacrifice which will be celebrated in their honour on the occasion. I must not anticipate the happy moment, but will return at once to my dear friend

and cheer her with an account of what I have seen and heard. [*Rises aloft and disappears.*

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

Help! help! to the rescue!

KING.

[*Recovering himself. Listening.*

Ha! I heard a cry of distress, and in Máṭhavya's voice too. What ho there!

VETRAVATÍ. [*Entering.*

Your friend is in danger; save him, great King.

KING.

Who dares insult the worthy Máṭhavya?

VETRAVATÍ.

Some evil demon, invisible to human eyes, has seized him, and carried him to one of the turrets of the Palace of Clouds.

KING. [*Rising.*

Impossible! Have evil spirits power over my subjects, even in my private apartments? Well, well,—

Daily I seem less able to avert
Misfortune from myself, and o'er my actions
Less competent to exercise control;

How can I then direct my subjects' ways,
Or shelter them from tyranny and wrong?

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

Halloo there! my dear friend; help! help!

KING. [*Advancing with rapid strides.*

Fear nothing——

THE SAME VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

Fear nothing, indeed! How can I help fearing when some monster is twisting back my neck, and is about to snap it as he would a sugar-cane?

KING. [*Looking round.*

What ho there! my bow.

SLAVE. [*Entering with a bow.*

Behold your bow, sire, and your arm-guard.

[*The king snatches up the bow and arrows.*

ANOTHER VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

Here, thirsting for thy life-blood, will I slay thee,
As a fierce tiger rends his struggling prey.
Call now thy friend Dushyanta to thy aid;
His bow is mighty to defend the weak;
Yet all its vaunted power shall be as nought

KING. [*With fury.*

What! dares he defy me to my face? Hold there, monster! Prepare to die, for your time is come. [*Stringing his bow*]. Vetravatí, lead the way to the terrace.

VETRAVATÍ.

This way, sire. [*They advance in haste.*

KING. [*Looking on every side.*

How's this? there is nothing to be seen.

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

Help! Save me! I can see you, though you cannot see me. I am like a mouse in the claws of a cat; my life is not worth a minute's purchase.

KING.

Avaunt, monster! You may pride yourself on the magic that renders you invisible, but my arrow shall find you out. Thus do I fix a shaft

That shall discern between an impious demon
And a good Bráhman; bearing death to thee,
To him deliverance—even as the swan
Distinguishes the milk from worthless water.[101]

[*Takes aim.*

Enter MÁTALI,[102] *holding* MÁṬHAVYA, *whom he releases.*

MÁTALI.

Turn thou thy deadly arrows on the demons;
Such is the will of Indra; let thy bow
Be drawn against the enemies of the gods;
But on thy friends cast only looks of favour.

KING. [*Putting back his arrow.*

What, Mátali! Welcome, most noble charioteer of the mighty Indra.

MÁTHAVYA.

So, here is a monster who thought as little about slaughtering me as if I had been a bullock for sacrifice, and you must e'en greet him with a welcome.

MÁTALI. [*Smiling.*

Great Prince, hear on what errand Indra sent me into your presence.

KING.

I am all attention.

MÁTALI.

There is a race of giants, the descendants of Kálanemi,[103] whom the gods find difficult to subdue.

KING.

So I have already heard from Nárada.[104]

MÁTALI.

Heaven's mighty lord, who deigns to call thee 'friend,'
Appoints thee to the post of highest honour,
As leader of his armies; and commits
The subjugation of this giant brood
To thy resistless arms, e'en as the sun
Leaves the pale moon to dissipate the darkness.

Let your Majesty, therefore, ascend at once the celestial car of Indra; and, grasping your arms, advance to victory.

KING.

The mighty Indra honours me too highly by such a mark of distinction. But tell me, what made you act thus towards my poor friend Máṭhavya?

MÁTALI.

I will tell you. Perceiving that your Majesty's spirit was completely broken by some distress of mind under which you were labouring, I determined to rouse your energies by moving you to anger. Because

To light a flame, we need but stir the embers;
The cobra, when incensed, extends his head
And springs upon his foe; the bravest men
Display their courage only when provoked.

KING. [*Aside to* MÁṬHAVYA.

My dear Máṭhavya, the commands of the great Indra must not be left unfulfilled. Go you and acquaint my minister, Pisuna, with what has happened, and say to him from me,

Dushyanta to thy care confides his realm—
Protect with all the vigour of thy mind
The interests of my people; while my bow
Is braced against the enemies of heaven.

MÁṬHAVYA.

I obey. [*Exit.*

MÁTALI.

Ascend, illustrious Prince. [*The* KING *ascends the car.*

[*Exeunt.*

ACT VII.

SCENE.—*The Sky.*

Enter KING DUSHYANTA *and* MÁTALI *in the car of Indra, moving in the air.*

KING.

My good Mátali, it appears to me incredible that I can merit such a mark of distinction for having simply fulfilled the behests of the great Indra.

MÁTALI. [*Smiling.*

Great Prince, it seems to me that neither of you is satisfied with himself.

You underrate the service you have rendered,
And think too highly of the god's reward:
He deems it scarce sufficient recompense
For your heroic deeds on his behalf.

KING.

Nay, Mátali, say not so. My most ambitious expectations

were more than realised by the honour conferred on me at the moment when I took my leave. For,

Tinged with celestial sandal, from the breast [105]
Of the great Indra, where before it hung,
A garland of the ever-blooming tree
Of Nandana [106] was cast about my neck
By his own hand: while, in the very presence
Of the assembled gods, I was enthroned
Beside their mighty lord, who smiled to see
His son Jayanta [107] envious of the honour.

MÁTALI.

There is no mark of distinction which your majesty does not deserve at the hands of the immortals. See,

Heaven's hosts acknowledge thee their second saviour:
For now thy bow's unerring shafts (as erst
The lion-man's terrific claws,[108]) have purged
The empyreal sphere from taint of demons foul.

KING.

The praise of my victory must be ascribed to the majesty of Indra.

When mighty gods make men their delegates
In martial enterprise, to them belongs

The palm of victory; and not to mortals.
Could the pale Dawn dispel the shades of night,
Did not the god of day, whose diadem
Is jewelled with a thousand beams of light,
Place him in front of his effulgent car?[11]

MÁTALI.

A very just comparison. [*Driving on.*] Great King, behold! the glory of thy fame has reached even to the vault of heaven.

Hark! yonder inmates of the starry sphere
Sing anthems worthy of thy martial deeds,
While with celestial colours they depict
The story of thy victories on scrolls
Formed of the leaves of heaven's immortal trees.

KING.

My good Mátali, yesterday, when I ascended the sky, I was so eager to do battle with the demons, that the road by which we were travelling towards Índra's heaven escaped my observation. Tell me, in which path of the seven winds are we now moving?

MÁTALI.

We journey in the path of Parivaha;[109]
The wind that bears along the triple Ganges,[110]

And causes Ursa's seven stars to roll
In their appointed orbits, scattering
Their several rays with equal distribution.
'Tis the same path that once was sanctified
By the divine impression of the foot
Of Vishṇu, when, to conquer haughty Bali,
He spanned the heavens in his second stride.[111]

KING.

This is the reason, I suppose, that a sensation of calm repose pervades all my senses. [*Looking down at the wheels.*] Ah! Mátali, we are descending towards the earth's atmosphere.

MÁTALI.

What makes you think so?

KING.

The car itself instructs me; we are moving
O'er pregnant clouds, surcharged with rain; below us
I see the moisture-loving Chátakas[112]
In sportive flight dart through the spokes; the steeds
Of Indra glisten with the lightning's flash;
And a thick mist bedews the circling wheels.

MÁTALI.

You are right; in a little while the chariot will touch the ground, and you will be in your own dominions.

KING. [*Looking down.*

How wonderful is the appearance of the earth as we rapidly descend!

Stupendous prospect! yonder lofty hills
Do suddenly uprear their towering heads
Amid the plain, while from beneath their crests
The ground receding sinks; the trees, whose stems
Seemed lately hid within their leafy tresses,
Rise into elevation, and display
Their branching shoulders; yonder streams, whose waters,
Like silver threads, but now were scarcely seen,
Grow into mighty rivers; lo! the earth
Seems upward hurled by some gigantic power.

MÁTALI.

Well described! [*Looking with awe.*] Grand, indeed, and lovely is the spectacle presented by the earth.

KING.

Tell me, Mátali, what is that range of mountains which, like a bank of clouds illumined by the setting sun, pours

down a stream of gold? On one side its base dips into the eastern ocean, and on the other side into the western.

MÁTALI.

Great Prince, it is called 'Golden-peak,'[113] and is the abode of the attendants of the god of Wealth. In this spot the highest forms of penance are wrought out.

There Kaśyapa,[114] the great progenitor
Of demons and of gods, himself the offspring
Of the divine Marichi, Brahmá's son,
With Aditi, his wife, in calm seclusion,
Does holy penance for the good of mortals.

KING.

Then I must not neglect so good an opportunity of obtaining his blessing. I should much like to visit this venerable personage and offer him my homage.

MÁTALI.

By all means. An excellent idea!

[*Guides the car to the earth.*

KING. [*In a tone of wonder.*

How's this?

Our chariot wheels move noiselessly. Around
No clouds of dust arise; no shock betokened

Our contact with the earth; we seem to glide
Above the ground, so lightly do we touch it.

MÁTALI.

Such is the difference between the car of Indra and that of your majesty.

KING.

In which direction, Mátali, is Kaśyapa's sacred retreat?

MÁTALI. [*Pointing.*

Where stands yon anchorite, towards the orb
Of the meridian sun, immoveable
As a tree's stem, his body half-concealed
By a huge ant-hill. Round about his breast
No sacred cord is twined,[115] but in its stead
A hideous serpent's skin. In place of necklace,
The tendrils of a withered creeper chafe
His wasted neck. His matted hair depends
In thick entanglement about his shoulders,
And birds construct their nests within its folds.[116]

KING.

I salute thee, thou man of austere devotion.

MÁTALI.

[*Holding in the reins of the car.*

Great Prince, we are now in the sacred grove of the holy Kasyapa—the grove that boasts as its ornament one of the five trees of Indra's heaven, reared by Aditi.

KING.

This sacred retreat is more delightful than heaven itself. I could almost fancy myself bathing in a pool of nectar.

MÁTALI. [*Stopping the chariot.*

Descend, mighty Prince.

KING. [*Descending.*

And what will you do, Mátali?

MÁTALI.

The chariot will remain where I have stopped it. We may both descend. [*Doing so.*] This way, great King. [*Walking on.*] You see around you the celebrated region where the holiest sages devote themselves to penitential rites.

KING.

I am filled with awe and wonder as I gaze.

In such a place as this do saints of earth
Long to complete their acts of penance; here,
Beneath the shade of everlasting trees,

Transplanted from the groves of Paradise,
May they inhale the balmy air, and need
No other nourishment;[117] here may they bathe
In fountains sparkling with the golden dust
Of lilies; here, on jewelled slabs of marble,
In meditation rapt, may they recline;
Here, in the presence of celestial nymphs,
E'en passion's voice is powerless to move them.

MÁTALI.

So true is it that the aspirations of the good and great are ever soaring upwards. [*Turning round and speaking off the stage.*] Tell me, Vriddha-śákalya, how is the divine son of Maríchi now engaged? What sayest thou? that he is conversing with Aditi and some of the wives of the great sages, and that they are questioning him respecting the duties of a faithful wife?

KING. [*Listening*

Then we must await the holy father's leisure.

MÁTALI. [*Looking at the* KING.

If your majesty will rest under the shade, at the foot of this Aśoka-tree,[118] I will seek an opportunity of announcing your arrival to Indra's reputed father.

KING.

As you think proper. [*Remains under the tree.*

MÁTALI.

Great King, I go. [*Exit.*

KING. [*Feeling his arm throb.*

Wherefore this causeless throbbing, O mine arm? [18]
All hope has fled for ever; mock me not
With presages of good, when happiness
Is lost, and nought but misery remains.

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES.

Be not so naughty. Do you begin already to show a refractory spirit?

KING. [*Listening.*

This is no place for petulance. Who can it be whose behaviour calls for such a rebuke? [*Looking in the direction of the sound and smiling.*] A child, is it? closely attended by two holy women. His disposition seems anything but child-like. See,

He braves the fury of yon lioness
Suckling its savage offspring, and compels
The angry whelp to leave the half-sucked dug,
Tearing its tender mane in boisterous sport.

Enter a CHILD, *attended by* TWO WOMEN *of the hermitage, in the manner described.*

CHILD.

Open your mouth, my young lion, I want to count your teeth.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

You naughty child, why do you teaze the animals? Know you not that we cherish them in this hermitage as if they were our own children? In good sooth, you have a high spirit of your own, and are beginning already to do justice to the name Sarva-damana (All-taming), given you by the hermits.

KING.

Strange! My heart inclines towards the boy with almost as much affection as if he were my own child. What can be the reason? I suppose my own childlessness makes me yearn towards the sons of others.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

This lioness will certainly attack you if you do not release her whelp.

CHILD. [*Laughing.*

Oh! indeed! let her come. Much I fear her, to be sure!

[*Pouts his under-lip in defiance.*

KING.

The germ of mighty courage lies concealed
Within this noble infant, like a spark
Beneath the fuel, waiting but a breath
To fan the flame and raise a conflagration.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Let the young lion go, like a dear child, and I will give you something else to play with.

CHILD.

Where is it? Give it me first. [*Stretches out his hand.*

KING. [*Looking at his hand.*

How's this? His hand exhibits one of those mystic marks[84] which are the sure prognostic of universal empire. See!

His fingers stretched in eager expectation
To grasp the wished-for toy, and knit together
By a close-woven web, in shape resemble
A lotus blossom, whose expanding petals
The early dawn has only half unfolded.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

We shall never pacify him by mere words, dear Suvratá. Be kind enough to go to my cottage, and you will find there

a plaything belonging to Márkándeya, one of the hermit's children. It is a peacock made of China-ware, painted in many colours. Bring it here for the child.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Very well. [*Exit.*

CHILD.

No, no; I shall go on playing with the young lion.

[*Looks at the* FEMALE ATTENDANT *and laughs.*

KING.

I feel an unaccountable affection for this wayward child.

How blessed the virtuous parents whose attire
Is soiled with dust, by raising from the ground
The child that asks a refuge in their arms!
And happy are they while with lisping prattle,
In accents sweetly inarticulate,
He charms their ears; and with his artless smiles
Gladdens their hearts,[119] revealing to their gaze
His tiny teeth just budding into view.

ATTENDANT.

I see how it is. He pays me no manner of attention. [*Looking off the stage.*] I wonder whether any of the hermits

are about here. [*Seeing the* KING.] Kind sir, could you come hither a moment and help me to release the young lion from the clutch of this child, who is teazing him in boyish play?

KING. [*Approaching and smiling.*

Listen to me, thou child of a mighty saint.

Dost thou dare show a wayward spirit here?
Here, in this hallowed region? Take thou heed
Lest, as the serpent's young defiles the sandal,[71]
Thou bring dishonour on the holy sage,
Thy tender-hearted parent, who delights
To shield from harm the tenants of the wood.

ATTENDANT.

Gentle sir, I thank you; but he is not the saint's son.

KING.

His behaviour and whole bearing would have led me to doubt it, had not the place of his abode encouraged the idea.

[*Follows the child, and takes him by the hand, according to the request of the attendant. Aside.*

I marvel that the touch of this strange child
Should thrill me with delight; if so it be,
How must the fond caresses of a son
Transport the father's soul who gave him being.

ATTENDANT. [*Looking at them both.*

Wonderful! Prodigious!

KING.

What excites your surprise, my good woman?

ATTENDANT.

I am astonished at the striking resemblance between the child and yourself; and, what is still more extraordinary, he seems to have taken to you kindly and submissively, though you are a stranger to him.

KING. [*Fondling the child.*

If he be not the son of the great sage, of what family does he come, may I ask?

ATTENDANT.

Of the race of Puru.

KING. [*Aside.*

What! are we, then, descended from the same ancestry? This, no doubt, accounts for the resemblance she traces between the child and me. Certainly it has always been an established usage among the princes of Puru's race,

To dedicate the morning of their days
To the world's weal, in palaces and halls,
'Mid luxury and regal pomp abiding;

Then, in the wane of life, to seek release
From kingly cares, and make the hallowed shade
Of sacred trees their last asylum, where
As hermits they may practise self-abasement,
And bind themselves by rigid vows of penance.

[*Aloud.*] But how could mortals by their own power gain admission to this sacred region?

ATTENDANT.

Your remark is just; but your wonder will cease when I tell you that his mother is the offspring of a celestial nymph, and gave him birth in the hallowed grove of Kaśyapa.

KING. [*Aside.*

Strange that my hopes should be again excited! [*Aloud.*] But what, let me ask, was the name of the prince whom she deigned to honour with her hand?

ATTENDANT.

How could I think of polluting my lips by the mention of a wretch who had the cruelty to desert his lawful wife?

KING. [*Aside.*

Ha! the description suits me exactly. Would I could

bring myself to inquire the name of the child's mother! [*Reflecting.*] But it is against propriety to make too minute inquiries about the wife of another man.[120]

FIRST ATTENDANT.

[*Entering with the china peacock in her hand.*

Sarva-damana, Sarva-damana, see, see, what a beautiful Śakoonta (bird).

CHILD. [*Looking round.*

My mother! Where? Let me go to her.

BOTH ATTENDANTS.

He mistook the word Śakoonta for Śakoontalá. The boy dotes upon his mother, and she is ever uppermost in his thoughts.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

Nay, my dear child, I said, Look at the beauty of this Śakoonta.

KING. [*Aside.*

What! is his mother's name Śakoontalá? But the name is not uncommon among women. Alas! I fear the mere similarity of a name, like the deceitful vapour of the desert,[95] has once more raised my hopes only to dash them to the ground.

CHILD.

Dear nurse, what a beautiful peacock! [*Takes the toy.*

FIRST ATTENDANT.

[*Looking at the child. In great distress.*

Alas! alas! I do not see the amulet on his wrist.

KING.

Don't distress yourself. Here it is. It fell off while he was struggling with the young lion. [*Stoops to pick it up.*

BOTH ATTENDANTS.

Hold! hold! Touch it not, for your life. How marvellous! He has actually taken it up without the slightest hesitation. [*Both raise their hands to their breasts and look at each other in astonishment.*

KING.

Why did you try to prevent my touching it?

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Listen, great Monarch. This amulet, known as 'The Invincible,' was given to the boy by the divine son of Marích, soon after his birth, when the natal ceremony was performed. Its peculiar virtue is, that when it falls on the ground, no one excepting the father or mother of the child can touch it unhurt.

KING.

And suppose another person touches it?

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Then it instantly becomes a serpent, and bites him.

KING.

Have you ever witnessed the transformation with your own eyes?

BOTH ATTENDANTS.

Over and over again.

KING. [*With rapture. Aside.*

Joy! joy! Are then my dearest hopes to be fulfilled?

[*Embraces the child.*

SECOND ATTENDANT.

Come, my dear Suvratá, we must inform Śakoontalá immediately of this wonderful event, though we have to interrupt her in the performance of her religious vows. [*Exeunt.*

CHILD. [*To the* KING.

Do not hold me. I want to go to my mother.

KING.

We will go to her together, and give her joy, my son.

CHILD.

Dushyanta is my father, not you.

KING. [*Smiling.*

His contradiction convinces me only the more.

Enter ŚAKOONTALÁ; *in widow's apparel, with her long hair twisted into a single braid.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

I have just heard that Sarva-damana's amulet has retained its form, though a stranger raised it from the ground. I can hardly believe in my good fortune. Yet why should not Sánumatí's prediction be verified?

KING. [*Gazing at* ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Alas! can this indeed be my Śakoontalá?

Clad in the weeds of widowhood, her face
Emaciate with fasting, her long hair
Twined in a single braid,[121] her whole demeanour
Expressive of her purity of soul:
With patient constancy she thus prolongs
The vow to which my cruelty condemned her.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Gazing at the* KING, *who is pale with remorse.*

Surely this is not like my husband; yet who can it be that

dares pollute by the pressure of his hand my child, whose amulet should protect him from a stranger's touch?

CHILD. [*Going to his mother.*

Mother, who is this man that has been kissing me and calling me his son?

KING.

My best beloved, I have indeed treated thee most cruelly, but am now once more thy fond and affectionate lover. Refuse not to acknowledge me as thy husband.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

Be of good cheer, my heart. The anger of Destiny is at last appeased. Heaven regards thee with compassion. But is he in very truth my husband?

KING.

Behold me, best and loveliest of women,
Delivered from the cloud of fatal darkness
That erst oppressed my memory. Again
Behold us brought together by the grace
Of the great lord of Heaven. So the moon
Shines forth from dim eclipse,[122] to blend his rays
With the soft lustre of his Rohiṇí.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

May my husband be victorious——

[*She stops short, her voice choked with tears.*

KING.

O fair one, though the utterance of thy prayer
Be lost amid the torrent of thy tears,
Yet does the sight of thy fair countenance,
And of thy pallid lips, all unadorned[123]
And colourless in sorrow for my absence,
Make me already more than conqueror.

CHILD.

Mother, who is this man?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

My child, ask the deity that presides over thy destiny.

KING. [*Falling at* ŚAKOONTALÁ'S *feet.*

Fairest of women, banish from thy mind
The memory of my cruelty; reproach
The fell delusion that o'erpowered my soul,
And blame not me, thy husband; 'tis the curse
Of him in whom the power of darkness[124] reigns,

That he mistakes the gifts of those he loves
For deadly evils. Even though a friend
Should wreathe a garland on a blind man's brow,
Will he not cast it from him as a serpent?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Rise, my own husband, rise. Thou wast not to blame. My own evil deeds, committed in a former state of being,[37] brought down this judgment upon me. How else could my husband, who was ever of a compassionate disposition, have acted so unfeelingly? [*The King rises*]. But tell me, my husband, how did the remembrance of thine unfortunate wife return to thy mind?

KING.

As soon as my heart's anguish is removed, and its wounds are healed, I will tell thee all.

Oh! let me, fair one, chase away the drop
That still bedews the fringes of thine eye;
And let me thus efface the memory
Of every tear that stained thy velvet cheek,
Unnoticed and unheeded by thy lord,
When in his madness he rejected thee.

[*Wipes away the tear.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

[*Seeing the signet-ring on his finger.*

Ah! my dear husband, is that the Lost Ring?

KING.

Yes; the moment I recovered it, my memory was restored.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

The ring was to blame in allowing itself to be lost at the very time when I was anxious to convince my noble husband of the reality of my marriage.

KING.

Receive it back, as the beautiful twining plant receives again its blossom in token of its reunion with the spring.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

Nay; I can never more place confidence in it. Let my husband retain it.

Enter MÁTALI.

MÁTALI.

I congratulate your Majesty. Happy are you in your reunion with your wife: happy are you in beholding the face of your own son.

KING.

Yes, indeed. My heart's dearest wish has borne sweet fruit. But tell me, Mátali, is this joyful event known to the great Indra?

MÁTALI. [*Smiling.*

What is unknown to the gods? But come with me, noble Prince, the divine Kaśyapa graciously permits thee to be presented to him.

KING.

Sakoontalá, take our child and lead the way. We will together go into the presence of the holy Sage.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

I shrink from entering the august presence of the great Saint, even with my husband at my side.

KING.

Nay; on such a joyous occasion it is highly proper. Come, come; I entreat thee. [*All advance.*

KAŚYAPA *is discovered seated on a throne with his wife* ADITI.

KAŚYAPA.

[*Gazing at* DUSHYANTA. *To his wife.*

O Aditi,
This is the mighty hero, King Dushyanta,
Protector of the earth; who, at the head

Of the celestial armies of thy son,
Does battle with the enemies of heaven.
Thanks to his bow, the thunderbolt of Indra
Rests from its work, no more the minister
Of death and desolation to the world,
But a mere symbol of divinity.

ADITI.

He bears in his noble form all the marks of dignity.

MÁTALI. [*To* DUSHYANTA.

Sire, the venerable progenitors of the celestials are gazing at your Majesty with as much affection as if you were their son. You may advance towards them.

KING.

Are these, O Mátali, the holy pair,
Offspring of Daksha and divine Maríchi,
Children of Brahmá's sons,[125] by sages deemed
Sole fountain of celestial light, diffused
Through twelve effulgent orbs?[114] Are these the pair
From whom the ruler of the triple world,[126]
Sovereign of gods and lord of sacrifice,
Sprang into being? That immortal pair
Whom Vishnu, greater than the self-existent,[127]

Chose for his parents, when, to save mankind,
He took upon himself the shape of mortals?

MÁTALI.

Even so.

KING. [*Prostrating himself.*

Most august of beings, Dushyanta, content to have fulfilled the commands of your son Indra, offers you his adoration.

KAŚYAPA.

My son, long may'st thou live, and happily may'st thou reign over the earth!

ADITI.

My son, may'st thou ever be invincible in the field of battle!

ŚAKOONTALÁ.

I also prostrate myself before you, most adorable beings, and my child with me.

KAŚYAPA.

My daughter,

Thy lord resembles Indra, and thy child
Is noble as Jayanta, Indra's son;
I have no worthier blessing left for thee,
May'st thou be faithful as the god's own wife!

ADITI.

My daughter, may'st thou be always the object of thy husband's fondest love; and may thy son live long to be the joy of both his parents! Be seated.

[*All sit down in the presence of* KAŚYAPA.

KAŚYAPA.

[*Regarding each of them by turns.*

Hail to the beautiful Śakoontalá!
Hail to her noble son! and hail to thee
Illustrious Prince! Rare triple combination
Of virtue, wealth, and energy united!

KING.

Most venerable Kaśyapa, by your favour all my desires were accomplished even before I was admitted to your presence. Never was mortal so honoured that his boon should be granted ere it was solicited. Because

Bloom before fruit, the clouds before the rain—
Cause first and then effect, in endless sequence,
Is the unchanging law of constant nature:
But, ere the blessing issued from thy lips,
The wishes of my heart were all fulfilled.

MÁTALI.

It is thus that the great progenitors of the world confer favours.

KING.

Most reverend Sage, this thy handmaid was married to me by the Gandharva ceremony,[35] and after a time was conducted to my palace by her relations. Meanwhile a fatal delusion seized me; I lost my memory and rejected her, thus committing a grievous offence against the venerable Kanwa, who is of thy divine race. Afterwards the sight of this ring restored my faculties, and brought back to my mind all the circumstances of my union with his daughter. But my conduct still seems to me incomprehensible;

As foolish as the fancies of a man
Who, when he sees an elephant, denies
That 'tis an elephant, yet afterwards,
When its huge bulk moves onward, hesitates,
Yet will not be convinced till it has passed
For ever from his sight, and left behind
No vestige of its presence save its footsteps.

KÁSYAPA.

My son, cease to think thyself in fault. Even the delusion

that possessed thy mind was not brought about by any act of thine. Listen to me.

KING.

I am attentive.

KAŚYAPA.

Know that when the nymph Menaká, the mother of Śakoontalá, became aware of her daughter's anguish in consequence of the loss of the ring at the nymph's pool, and of thy subsequent rejection of her, she brought her and confided her to the care of Aditi. And I no sooner saw her than I ascertained by my divine power of meditation,[134] that thy repudiation of thy poor faithful wife had been caused entirely by the curse of Durvásas—not by thine own fault—and that the spell would terminate on the discovery of the ring.

KING. [*Drawing a deep breath.*

Oh! what a weight is taken off my mind, now that my character is cleared of reproach.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

Joy! joy! My revered husband did not, then, reject me without good reason, though I have no recollection of the curse pronounced upon me. But, in all probability, I unconsciously brought it upon myself, when I was so distracted on

being separated from my husband soon after our marriage. For I now remember that my two friends advised me not to fail to show the ring in case he should have forgotten me.

KAŚYAPA.

At last, my daughter, thou art happy, and hast gained thy heart's desire. Indulge, then, no feeling of resentment against thy partner. See, now,

Though he repulsed thee, 'twas the sage's curse
That clouded his remembrance; 'twas the curse
That made thy tender husband harsh towards thee.
Soon as the spell was broken, and his soul
Delivered from its darkness, in a moment
Thou didst regain thine empire o'er his heart.
So on the tarnished surface of a mirror
No image is reflected, till the dust
That dimmed its wonted lustre is removed.

KING.

Holy father, see here the hope of my royal race.

[*Takes his child by the hand.*

KAŚYAPA.

Know that he, too, will become the monarch of the whole earth. Observe,

Soon, a resistless hero, shall he cross
The trackless ocean, borne above the waves
In an aerial car; and shall subdue
The earth's seven sea-girt isles.[128] Now has he gained,
As the brave tamer of the forest-beasts,
The title Sarva-damana; but then
Mankind shall hail him as King Bharata,[129]
And call him the supporter of the world.

KING.

We cannot but entertain the highest hopes of a child for whom your highness performed the natal rites.

ADITI.

My revered husband, should not the intelligence be conveyed to Kanwa, that his daughter's wishes are fulfilled, and her happiness complete? He is Śakoontalá's foster-father. Menaká, who is one of my attendants, is her mother, and dearly does she love her daughter.

ŚAKOONTALÁ. [*Aside.*

The venerable matron has given utterance to the very wish that was in my mind.

KAŚYAPA.

His penances have gained for him the faculty of omniscience, and the whole scene is already present to his mind's eye.

KING.

Then most assuredly he cannot be very angry with me.

KAŚYAPA.

Nevertheless it becomes us to send him intelligence of this happy event, and hear his reply. What, ho there!

PUPIL. [*Entering.*

Holy father, what are your commands?

KAŚYAPA.

My good Gálava, delay not an instant, but hasten through the air and convey to the venerable Kanwa, from me, the happy news that the fatal spell has ceased, that Dushyanta's memory is restored, that his daughter Śakoontalá has a son, and that she is once more tenderly acknowledged by her husband.

PUPIL.

Your highness's commands shall be obeyed. [*Exit.*

KAŚYAPA.

And now, my dear son, take thy consort and thy child, re-ascend the car of Indra, and return to thy imperial capital.

KING.

Most holy father, I obey.

KAŚYAPA.

And accept this blessing—

For countless ages may the god of gods,
Lord of the atmosphere, by copious showers
Secure abundant harvest to thy subjects;
And thou by frequent offerings preserve
The Thunderer's friendship! Thus, by interchange
Of kindly actions, may you both confer
Unnumbered benefits on earth and heaven!

KING.

Holy father, I will strive, as far as I am able, to attain this happiness.

KAŚYAPA.

What other favour can I bestow on thee, my son?

KING.

What other can I desire? If, however, you permit me to form another wish, I would humbly beg that the saying of the sage Bharata[130] be fulfilled:

May kings reign only for their subjects' weal!
May the divine Saraswati,[131] the source
Of speech, and goddess of dramatic art,
Be ever honoured by the great and wise!
And may the purple self-existent god,[132]
Whose vital Energy[133] pervades all space,
From future transmigrations save my soul!

[*Exeunt omnes.*

NOTES.

[1] *Íśa preserve you.*

That is to say, 'the Supreme Lord,' a name given to the god Śiva, the Destroyer; who is associated with Brahmá, the Creator, and Vishṇu, the Preserver: constituting with them the Hindú Triad. Kálidása indulges the religious predilections of his fellow-townsmen by beginning and ending the play with a prayer to Śiva, who had a large temple in Ujjayiní, the modern Oujein, the city of Vikramáditya, situated north-eastward from Gujarát.

[2] *In these eight forms.*

The worshippers of Śiva, who were Pantheists in the sense of believing that Śiva was himself all that exists, as well as the cause of all that is, held that there were eight different manifestations of their god, called Rudras; and that these had their types in the eight visible forms enumerated here. The Hindús reckon five elements. The most subtle is æther (*ákáśa*), supposed to convey sound, which is its peculiar attribute or property (*guṇa*). The next element—Air, has for its properties, sound and feeling. The third—Fire, has sound, feeling and colour. The fourth—Water, has sound, feeling, colour, and taste. The fifth—Earth, has all the other properties, with the addition of smell.

[3] *An audience of educated and discerning men.*

Lit. 'An audience, who are chiefly men of education and discernment.' Few could have been present at these dramatic representations excepting learned and educated men. The mass of the composition being in Sanskrit, would not have been intelligible to the vulgar and illiterate.

[4] *Śakoontalá, or the Lost Ring.*

The literal title is 'Śakoontalá recognised by the token or ring.'

[5] *The present Summer season.*

Hindú poets divide the year into six seasons of two months each, viz.: 1. Spring (Vasanta), beginning about the middle of March; or, according to some, February. 2. Summer (Gríshma). 3. Rains (Varsha). 4. Autumn (Śarad). 5. Winter (Hemanta). 6. Dews (Śiśira). Practically, however, there are only three seasons in India. 1. The hot season. 2. The rains. 3. The cold weather. In Lower Bengal and Behar, the first of these seasons begins in March, the second in June, and the third in November. The temperature of the cold season is highly exhilarating, and the climate is then superior to that of any portion of the English year. In Calcutta, this season continues for about three months; in Upper India, for about five; and in the Panjáb for about seven. The rains in Bengal Proper are more violent and protracted than in Hindústán and the Panjáb. In the latter country they hardly last for more than two months, and even then only fall at intervals. Plays were acted on solemn and festive occasions, on lunar holidays, and especially at the changes of the seasons.

[6] *Of fragrant Páṭalas.*

The Páṭala or trumpet-flower; *Bignonia suave-olens.*

[7] *With sweet Śirísha flowers.*

The flowers of the *Acacia Śirísha* were used by the Hindú women as ear-ornaments.

[8] *King Dushyanta.*

For the genealogy of King Dushyanta see Introduction, page xxiv.

[9] *That wields the trident.*

Śiva is called Pináḳin, that is, 'armed with a trident;' or, according to some, a bow named Pináka. Śiva, not being invited to Daksha's

sacrifice, was so indignant, that, with his wife, he suddenly presented himself, confounded the sacrifice, dispersed the gods, and chasing Yajna, 'the lord of sacrifice,' who fled in the form of a deer, overtook and decapitated him.

10 *Their waving plumes, that late*
Fluttered above their brows, are motionless.

The Chámarí, or chowrie, formed of the white bushy tail of the Yak, or *Bos grunniens*, was placed as an ornament between the ears of horses, like the plume of the war-horse of chivalry. The velocity of the chariot caused it to lose its play, and appear fixed in one direction, like a flag borne rapidly against the wind.

11 *The steeds of Indra and the Sun.*

That is, the speed of the chariot resembled that of the Wind and the Sun. Indra was the god of the firmament or atmosphere;—the Jupiter Tonans of Hindú mythology,—and presided over the forty-nine Winds. He has a heaven of his own (Swarga), of which he is the lord; and, although inferior to the three great deities of Hindú mythology (Brahmá, Vishṇu, and Śiva), he is chief of the secondary gods. The Hindús represent the Sun as seated in a chariot, drawn by seven green horses, having before him a lovely youth without legs, who acts as his charioteer, and who is Aruṇa, or the Dawn personified.

12 *Puru's race.*

See Dushyanta's pedigree detailed at page xxiv of the Introduction.

13 *The great sage Kanwa.*

The sage Kanwa was a descendant of Kaśyapa, whom the Hindús consider to have been the father of the inferior gods, demons, man, fish, reptiles, and all animals, by his twelve wives. Kanwa was the chief of a number of devotees, or hermits, who had constructed a hermitage on the banks of the river Máliní, and surrounded it with gardens and groves,

where penitential rites were performed, and animals were reared for sacrificial purposes, or for the amusement of the inmates. There is nothing new in asceticism. The craving after self-righteousness, and the desire of acquiring merit by self-mortification, is an innate principle of the human heart, and ineradicable even by Christianity. Witness the monastic institutions of the Romish Church, of which Indian penance-groves were the type. The Superior of a modern Convent is but the anti-type of Kanwa; and what is Romanism but humanity developing itself in some of its most inveterate propensities?

[14] *He has gone to Soma-tírtha.*

A place of pilgrimage in the west of India, on the coast of Gujarát, near the temple of Somanáth, or Somnát, made notorious by its gates, which were brought back from Ghazní by Lord Ellenborough's orders in 1842, and are now to be seen in the arsenal at Agra. These places of pilgrimage were generally fixed on the bank of some sacred stream, or in the vicinity of some holy spring. The word *tírtha* is derived from a Sanskṛit root, *tṛí*, 'to cross,' implying that the river has to be passed through, either for the washing away of sin, or extrication from some adverse destiny. Thousands of devotees still flock to the most celebrated Tírthas on the Ganges, at Benares, Haridwár, etc.

[15] *Ingudí.*

A tree, commonly called Ingua, or Jiyaputa, from the fruit of which oil was extracted, which the devotees used for their lamps and for ointment. One synonym for this tree is *tápasa-taru*, 'the anchorite's tree.'

[16] *Bark-woven vests.*

Dresses made of bark, worn by ascetics, were washed in water, and then suspended to dry on the branches of trees.

[17] *By deep canals.*

It was customary to dig trenches round the roots of trees, to collect the rain-water.

[18] *This throbbing arm.*

A quivering sensation in the right arm was supposed by the Hindús to prognosticate union with a beautiful woman. Throbbings of the arm or eyelid, if felt on the right side, were omens of good fortune in men; if on the left, bad omens. The reverse was true of women.

[19] *The hard acacia's stem.*

The Śami tree, a kind of acacia (*Acacia Suma*), the wood of which is very hard, and supposed by the Hindús to contain fire.

[20] *The lotus.*

This beautiful plant, the varieties of which, white, blue, and red, are numerous, bears some resemblance to our water-lily. It is as favourite a subject of allusion and comparison with Hindú poets as the rose is with Persian.

[21] *With the Śaivala entwined.*

The Śaivala (*Vallisneria*), is an aquatic plant, which spreads itself over ponds, and interweaves itself with the lotus. The interlacing of its stalks is compared in poetry to braided hair.

[22] *Yon Kesára tree.*

The Kesára tree (*Mimusops elengi*), is the same as the Bakula, frequent mention of which is made in some of the Purâṇas. It bears a strong-smelling flower, which, according to Sir W. Jones, is ranked among the flowers of the Hindú paradise. The tree is very ornamental in pleasure-grounds.

[23] *Would that my union with her were permissible.*

A Brâhman might marry a woman of the military or kingly class next below him, and the female offspring of such a marriage would belong to a mixed caste, and might be lawfully solicited in marriage by a man of the military class. But, if Śakoontalá were a pure Brâhmaní woman, both on the mother's and father's side, she would be ineligible as the wife of a

Kshatriya king. Dushyanta discovers afterwards that she was, in fact, the daughter of the great Viśwámitra (see note 27), who was of the same caste as himself, though her mother was the nymph Menaká.

[24] *I trust all is well with your devotional rites.*

This was the regular formula of salutation addressed to persons engaged in religious exercises.

[25] *This water that we have brought with us will serve to bathe our guest's feet.*

Water for the feet is one of the first things invariably provided for a guest in all Eastern countries. Compare Genesis, xxiv. 32; Luke, vii. 44. If the guest were a Bráhman or a man of rank, a respectful offering (*argha*) of rice, fruit, and flowers was next presented. In fact, the rites of hospitality in India were enforced by very stringent regulations. The observance of them ranked as one of the five great sacraments, and no punishment was thought too severe for one who violated them. If a guest departed unhonoured from a house, his sins were to be transferred to the householder, and all the merits of the householder were to be transferred to him.

[26] *Sapta-parṇa tree.*

A tree having seven leaves on a stalk (*Echites scholaris*).

[27] *Viśwámitra, whose family name is Kauśika.*

In the Rámáyaṇa, the great sage Viśwámitra (both king and saint), who raised himself by his austerities from the regal to the Bráhmanical caste, is said to be the son of Gádhi, King of Kanuj, grandson of Kuśanátha, and great grandson of Kuśika or Kuśa. On his accession to the throne, in the room of his father Gádhi, in the course of a tour through his dominions, he visited the hermitage of the sage Vaśishṭha, where the Cow of Plenty, a cow granting all desires, excited his cupidity. He offered the sage untold treasures for the cow; but being refused, prepared to take it by force. A long war ensued between the king and the sage,

symbolical of the struggles between the military and Brâhmanical classes), which ended in the defeat of Viśwâmitra, whose vexation was such, that he devoted himself to austerities in the hope of attaining the condition of a Brâhman. The Rámâyaṇa recounts how, by gradually increasing the rigour of his penance through thousands of years, he successively earned the title of Royal Saint, Saint, Great Saint, and Brâhman Saint. It was not till he had gained this last title that Vaśishṭha consented to acknowledge his equality with himself, and ratify his admission into the Brâhmanical state. It was at the time of Viśwámitra's advancement to the rank of a Sage, and whilst he was still a Kshatriya, that Indra, jealous of his increasing power, sent the nymph Menaká to seduce him from his life of mortification and continence. The Rámâyaṇa records his surrender to this temptation, and relates that the nymph was his companion in the hermitage for ten years, but does not allude to the birth of Śakoontalá during that period.

[28] *The inferior gods, I am aware, are jealous.*

According to the Hindú system, Indra and the other inferior deities were not the possessors of Swarga, or heaven, by indefeasible right. They accordingly viewed with jealousy, and even alarm, any extraordinary persistency by a human being in acts of penance, as it raised him to a level with themselves; and, if carried beyond a certain point, enabled him to dispossess them of Paradise. Indra was therefore the enemy of excessive self-mortification, and had in his service numerous nymphs who were called his 'weapons,' and whose business it was to impede by their seductions the devotion of holy men.

[29] *Gautamí.*

The name of the matron or superior of the female part of the society of hermits. Every association of religious devotees seems to have included a certain number of women, presided over by an elderly and venerable matron, whose authority resembled that of an abbess in a convent of nuns.

[30] *Kusa-grass.*

This grass was held sacred by the Hindús, and was abundantly used in all their religious ceremonies. Its leaves are very long, and taper to a sharp needle-like point, of which the extreme acuteness was proverbial; whence the epithet applied to a clever man, 'Sharp as the point of Kusa-grass.' Its botanical name is *Poa cynosuroides.*

[31] *Kuruvaka.*

A species of Jhinti, or Barleria, with purple flowers, and covered with sharp prickles.

[32] *The jester.*

See an account of this character in the Introduction, page 21.

[33] *We have nothing to eat but roast game.*

The Indian game is often very dry and flavourless.

[34] *Attended by the Yavana women.*

Who these women were has not been accurately ascertained. Yavana is properly Arabia, but is also a name applied to Greece. The Yavana women were therefore either natives of Arabia or Greece, and their business was to attend upon the king, and take charge of his weapons, especially his bow and arrows. Professor H. H. Wilson, in his translation of the Vikramorvasí, where the same word occurs (Act V., p. 261), remarks that Tartarian or Bactrian women may be intended.

[35] *In the disc of crystal.*

That is, the sun-gem (*Súrya-kánta*, 'beloved by the sun,') a shining stone resembling crystal. Professor Wilson calls it a fabulous stone with fabulous properties, and mentions another stone, the moon-gem (*chandra-kánta*). It may be gathered from this passage that the sun-stone was a kind of glass lens, and that the Hindús were not ignorant of the properties of this instrument at the time when 'Sakoontalá' was written.

36 *Some falling blossom of the jasmine.*

The jasmine here intended was a kind of double jasmine with a very delicious perfume, sometimes called 'Arabian jasmine' (*Jasminum zambac*). It was a delicate plant, and, as a creeper, would depend on some other tree for support. The Arka, or sun-tree (Gigantic Asclepias: *Calotropis gigantea*), on the other hand, was a large and vigorous shrub. Hence the former is compared to Śakoontalá, the latter to the sage Kanwa.

37 *The mellowed fruit*
Of virtuous actions in some former birth.

The doctrine of the transmigration of the soul from one body to another is an essential dogma of the Hindú religion, and connected with it is the belief in the power which every human being possesses of laying up for himself a store of merit by good deeds performed in the present or former births. Indeed the condition of every person is supposed to derive its character of happiness or misery, elevation or degradation, from the virtues or vices of previous states of being. The consequences of actions in a former birth are called *vipáka;* they may be either good or bad, but are rarely unmixed with evil taint. In the present comparison, however, they are described as pure and unalloyed. With reference to the first four lines of this stanza, compare Catullus, Carmen Nuptiale, Verse 39.

'Ut flos in septis secretus nascitur hortis,
Ignotus pecori, nullo contusus aratro,
Quem mulcent aurae, firmat sol, educat imber:
Multi illum pueri, multae optavere puellae:
Idem quum tenui carptus defloruit ungui,
Nulli illum pueri, nullae optavere puellae:
Sic virgo, dum intacta manet,' etc.

38 *The sixth part of their grain.*

According to Manu, a king might take a sixth part of liquids, flowers, roots, fruit, grass, etc.; but, even though dying with want, he was not to receive any tax from a Bráhman learned in the Vedas.

[39] *A title only one degree removed from that of a Saint.*

Dushyanta was a Rájarshi; that is, a man of the military class who had attained the rank of Royal Sage or Saint by the practice of religious austerities. The title of Royal or Imperial Saint was only one degree inferior to that of Saint. Compare note 27.

[40] *Chanted by inspired bards.*

Or celestial minstrels, called Gandharbas. These beings were the musicians of Indra's heaven, and their business was to amuse the inhabitants of Swarga by singing the praises of gods, saints, or heroes. Compare note 11.

[41] *In their fierce warfare with the powers of hell.*

Indra and the other inferior gods (compare note 11) were for ever engaged in hostilities with their half-brothers, the demons called Daityas, who were the giants or Titans of Hindú mythology. On such occasions the gods seem to have depended very much upon the assistance they received from mortal heroes.

[42] *Evil demons are disturbing our sacrificial rites.*

The religious rites and sacrifices of holy men were often disturbed by certain evil spirits or goblins called Rákṣhasas, who were the determined enemies of piety and devotion. No great sacrifice or religious ceremony was ever carried on without an attempt on the part of these demons to impede its celebration; and the most renowned saints found it necessary on such occasions to acknowledge their dependance on the strong arm of the military class, by seeking the aid of warriors and heroes. The inability of holy men, who had attained the utmost limit of spiritual power, to cope with the spirits of evil, and the superiority of physical force in this respect, is very remarkable.

[43] *Vishṇu.*

Vishṇu, the Preserver, was one of the three principal gods. He became incarnate in various forms for the good of mortals, and is the great enemy of the demons.

[44] *Like king Triśanku.*

The story of this monarch is told in the Rámáyana. He is there described as a just and pious prince of the solar race, who aspired to celebrate a great sacrifice, hoping thereby to ascend to heaven in his mortal body. After various failures, he had recourse to Viśwámitra, who undertook to conduct the sacrifice, and invited all the gods to be present. They, however, refused to attend; upon which the enraged Viśwámitra, by his own power, transported Triśanku to the skies, whither he had no sooner arrived than he was hurled down again by Indra and the gods; but being arrested in his downward course by the sage, he remained suspended between heaven and earth, forming a constellation in the southern hemisphere.

[45] *Ointment of Usíra-root.*

The root of a fragrant grass (*Andropogon muricatum*), from which a cooling ointment was made

[46] *The very breath of his nostrils.*

Compare Lam. IV., 20. 'The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken.'

[47] *God of the flowery shafts.*

The Hindú Cupid, or god of love (Káma), is armed with a bow made of sugar-cane, the string of which consists of bees. He has five arrows, each tipped with the blossom of a flower, which pierce the heart through the five senses; and his favourite arrow is pointed with the *chúta*, or mango-flower.

[48] *E'en now in thy unbodied essence lurks*
The fire of Śiva's anger.

The story is thus told in the Rámáyaṇa. Cupid (Káma) once approached Śiva that he might influence him with love for his wife, Párvatí. Śiva happened then to be practising austerities, and intent on a vow of chastity. He therefore cursed the god of love in a terrible voice,

and at the same time a flash from his eye caused the god's body to shrivel into ashes. Thus Cupid was made incorporeal, and from that time was called 'the bodiless one.'

49 *Like the flame,*
That ever hidden in the secret depths
Of ocean, smoulders there unseen.

This submarine fire was called Aurva, from the following fable. The Ṛishi Urva, who had gained great power by his austerities, was pressed he created from his thigh a devouring fire, which as soon as it was pro- by the gods and others to perpetuate his race. He consented, but warned them that his offspring would consume the world. Accordingly, duced, demanded nourishment, and would have destroyed the whole earth, had not Brahmá appeared and assigned the ocean as its habitation, and the waves as its food. The spot where it entered the sea was called 'the mare's mouth.' Doubtless the story was invented to suit the phenomenon of some marine volcano, which may have exhaled through the water bituminous inflammable gas, and which, perhaps in the form of a horse's mouth, was at times visible above the sea.

50 *Who on his 'scutcheon bears the monster-fish.*

The Hindú Cupid is said to have subdued a marine monster, which was, therefore, painted on his banner.

51 *The graceful undulation of her gait.*

Hansa-gámini, 'walking like a swan,' was an epithet for a graceful woman. The Indian law-giver, Manu, recommends that a Bráhman should choose for his wife a young maiden, whose gait was like that of a phœnicopter, or flamingo, or even like that of a young elephant. The idea in the original is, that the weight of her hips had caused the peculiar appearance observable in the print of her feet. Largeness of the hips was considered a great beauty in Hindú women, and would give an undulatory motion to their walk.

[52] *The Mádhavi.*

A large and beautiful creeper (*Gærtnera racemosa*), bearing white, fragrant flowers, to which constant allusion is made in Sanskṛit plays.

[53] *Pines to be united with the moon.*

A complete revolution of the moon, with respect to the stars, being made in twenty-seven days, odd hours, the Hindús divide the heavens into twenty-seven constellations (asterisms) or lunar stations, one of which receives the moon for one day in each of his monthly journies. As the Moon, Chandra, is considered to be a masculine deity, the Hindús fable these twenty-seven constellations as his wives, and personify them as the daughters of Daksha. Of these twenty-seven wives, twelve of whom give names to the twelve months, Chandra is supposed to show the greatest affection for the fourth, Rohiṇí, but each of the others, and amongst them Viśákhá, is represented as jealous of this partiality, and eager to secure the Moon's favour for herself. Dushyanta probably means to compare himself to the Moon (he being of the lunar race) and Śakoontalá to Viśákhá.

[54] *Checks its fall.*

Owing to emaciation and disuse of the bow, the callosities on the fore-arm, usually caused by the bow-string, were not sufficiently prominent to prevent the bracelet from slipping down from the wrist to the elbow, when the arm was raised to support the head. This is a favourite idea with Kálidása to express the attenuation caused by love.

[55] *No nuptial rites prevail..*

A marriage without the usual ceremonies is called Gándharva. It was supposed to be the form of marriage prevalent among the nymphs of Indra's heaven. In the 3rd Book of Manu (v. 22), it is included among the various marriage rites, and is said to be an union proceeding entirely from love, or mutual inclination, and concluded without any religious services, and without consulting relatives. It was recognised as a legal

marriage by Manu and other law-givers, though it is difficult to say in what respect it differed from unlawful cohabitation.

[56] *The loving birds doomed by fate to nightly separation.*

That is, the male and female of the Chakra-vâka, commonly called Chakwa and Chakwí, or Brâhmaní duck (*Anas casarca*). These birds associate together during the day, and are, like turtle-doves, patterns of connubial affection: but the legend is, that they are doomed to pass the night apart, in consequence of a curse pronounced upon them by a saint whom they had offended. As soon as night commences, they take up their station on the opposite banks of a river, and call to each other in piteous cries. The Bengálís consider their flesh to be a good medicine for fever.

[57] *The great sage Durvásas.*

A saint or Muni, represented by the Hindú poets as excessively choleric and inexorably severe. The Purâṇas and other poems contain frequent accounts of the terrible effects of his imprecations on various occasions, the slightest offence being in his eyes deserving of the most fearful punishment. On one occasion he cursed Indra, merely because his elephant let fall a garland he had given to this god; and in consequence of this imprecation all plants withered, men ceased to sacrifice, and the gods were overcome in their wars with the demons.

[58] *Propitiatory offering.*

Compare Note 25.

[59] *His blushing charioteer.*

Compare Note 11.

[60] *Night-loving lotus.*

Some species of the lotus, especially the white esculent kind, open their petals during the night, and close them during the day, whence the moon is often called the 'lover, or lord of the lotuses.'

[61] *The very centre of the sacred fire.*

Fire was an important object of veneration with the Hindús, as with the ancient Persians. Perhaps the chief worship recommended in the Vedas is that of Fire and the Sun. The holy fire was deposited in a hallowed part of the house, or in a sacred building, and kept perpetually burning. Every morning and evening, oblations were offered to it by dropping clarified butter into the flame, accompanied with prayers and invocations.

[62] *As in the sacred tree the mystic fire.*

Literally, 'as the Śamí-tree is pregnant with fire.' The legend is, that the goddess Párvatí being one day under the influence of love, reposed on a trunk of this tree, whereby a sympathetic warmth was generated in the pith or interior of the wood, which ever after broke into a sacred flame on the slightest attrition.

[63] *Hastinápur.*

The ancient Delhi, situated on the Ganges, and the capital of Dushyanta. Its site is about fifty miles from the modern Delhi, which is on the Jumna.

[64] *E'en as Yayáti Śarmishṭhá adored.*

Śarmishṭhá was the daughter of Vṛisha-parvan, king of the demons, and wife of Yayáti, son of Nahusha, one of the princes of the lunar dynasty, and ancestor of Dushyanta. Puru was the son of Yayáti, by Śarmishṭhá.

[65] *And for whose encircling bed,*
Sacred Kuśa-grass is spread.

At a sacrifice, sacred fires were lighted at the four cardinal points, and Kuśa-grass was scattered around each fire.

[66] *Koïl.*

The Koïl, or Kokil, is the Indian cuckoo. It is sometimes called Parabhṛita ('nourished by another'), because the female is known to leave her eggs in the nest of the crow to be hatched. The bird is as great

a favourite with Indian poets as the nightingale with European. One of its names is 'Messenger of Spring.' Its note is a constant subject of allusion, and is described as beautifully sweet, and, if heard on a journey, indicative of good fortune. Everything, however, is beautiful by comparison. The song of the Koïl is not only very dissimilar, but very inferior to that of the nightingale.

67 *The peacock on the lawn*
Ceases its dance.

The Indian peacock is very restless, especially at the approach of rain, in which it is thought to take delight. Its circular movements are a frequent subject of allusion with Hindú poets, and are often by them compared to dancing.

68 *The moonlight of the grove.*

The name of Śakoontalá's favourite jasmine, spoken of in the 1st Act. See page 17 of this volume.

69 *Fig-tree.*

Not the Banyan-tree (*Ficus Indica*), nor the Pippala (*Ficus religiosa*) but the Glomerous Fig-tree (*Ficus glomerata*), which yields a resinous milky juice from its bark, and is large enough to afford abundant shade.

70 *The poor female Chakravaka.*

Compare note 56.

71 *Like a young tendril of the sandal-tree torn from its home in the western mountains.*

The sandal is a large kind of myrtle with pointed leaves (*Sirium myrtifolium*). The wood affords many highly esteemed perfumes, unguents, etc., and is celebrated for its delicious scent. It is chiefly found on the slopes of the Malaya mountain or Western Ghauts on the Malabar coast. The roots of the tree are said to be infested with snakes. Indeed

it seems to pay dearly for the fragrance of its wood: 'The root is infested by serpents, the blossoms by bees, the branches by monkeys, the summit by bears. In short, there is not a part of the sandal-tree that is not occupied by the vilest impurities.'—Hitopadésa, verse 162.

[72] *The calm seclusion of thy former home.*

'When the father of a family perceives his own wrinkles and grey hair, committing the care of his wife to his sons, or accompanied by her, let him repair to the woods and become a hermit.'—Manu, VI., 2. It was usual for kings, at a certain time of life, to abdicate the throne in favour of the heir-apparent, and pass the remainder of their days in seclusion.

[73] *A frequent offering to our household gods.*

This was an offering (*bali*) in honour of those spiritual beings called 'household deities,' which were supposed to hover round and protect houses. It was made by throwing up into the air in some part of the house, (generally at the door) the remains of the morning and evening meal of rice or grain, uttering at the same time a *mantra*, or prayer.

[74] *In other states of being.*

Dim recollections of occurrences in former states of existence are supposed occasionally to cross the mind. Compare note 37.

[75] *The Chamberlain.*

The attendant on the women's apartment. He is generally a Bráhman, and usually appears in the plays as a tottering and decrepit old man, leaning on his staff of office.

[76] *The king of serpents on his thousand heads.*

A mythological serpent, the personification of eternity, and king of the Nâgas, or snakes, who inhabit the lowermost of the seven infernal regions, His body formed the couch of Vishnu, reposing on the waters of Chaos,

whilst his thousand heads were the god's canopy. He is also said to uphold the world on one of his heads.

[77] *The chamber of the consecrated fire.*

Compare note 61.

[78] *Two heralds.*

These heralds were introduced into Hindú plays something in the same manner as a Chorus; and, although their especial duty was to announce, in measured verse, the periods of the day, and particularly the fixed divisions into which the king's day was divided; yet the strain which they poured forth frequently contained allusions to incidental circumstances. The royal office was no sinecure. From the Dasa-kumára it appears that the day and night were each divided into eight portions of one hour and a half, reckoned from sun-rise; and were thus distributed:—Day—1. The king, being dressed, is to audit accounts; 2. He is to pronounce judgment in appeals; 3. He is to breakfast; 4. He is to receive and make presents; 5. He is to discuss political questions with his ministers; 6. He is to amuse himself; 7. He is to review his troops; 8. He is to hold a military council.—Night—1. He is to receive the reports of his spies and envoys; 2. He is to sup or dine; 3. He is to retire to rest after the perusal of some sacred work; 4 and 5. He is to sleep; 6. He is to rise and purify himself; 7. He is to hold a private consultation with his ministers, and instruct his officers; 8. He is to attend upon the *Purohita* or family-priest, for the performance of religious ceremonies. See Wilson's *Hindú Theatre*, vol. 1, p. 209.

[79] *Feeling a quivering sensation in her right eyelid.*

Compare note 18.

[80] *The protector of the four classes of the people, the guardian of the four orders of the priesthood.*

The most remarkable feature in the Hindú social system, as depicted in the plays, was the division of the people into four classes or castes:—

1st. The sacredotal, consisting of the Brâhmans.—2nd. The military, consisting of fighting men, and including the king himself and the royal family. This class enjoyed great privileges, and must have been practically the most powerful.—3rd. The commercial, including merchants and husbandmen.—4th. The servile, consisting of servants and slaves.—Of these four divisions the first alone has been preserved in its purity to the present day, although the Râjputs claim to be the representatives of the second class. The others have been lost in a multitude of mixed castes formed by intermarriage, and bound together by similarity of trade or occupation. With regard to the sacerdotal class, the Brâhmans, who formed it, were held to be the chief of all human beings; they were superior to the king, and their lives and property were protected by the most stringent laws. They were to divide their lives into four quarters, during which they passed through the four orders of the priesthood, viz., as religious students, as householders, as anchorites, and as religious mendicants.

[81] *That he is pleased with ill-assorted unions.*

The god Brahmâ seems to have enjoyed a very unfortunate notoriety as taking pleasure in ill-assorted marriages, and encouraging them by his own example in the case of his own daughter.

[82] *Śachî's sacred pool near Śakrâvatâra.*

Śakra is a name of the god Indra, and Śakrâvatâra is a sacred place of pilgrimage where he descended upon earth. Śachí is his wife, to whom a *tîrtha*, or holy bathing-place, was probably consecrated at the place where Śakoontalâ had performed her ablutions. Compare Note 14.

[83] *The wily Koïl.*

Compare Note 66.

[84] *With the discus, or mark of empire in the lines of his hand.*

When the lines of the right hand formed themselves into a circle, it was thought to be the mark of a future hero or emperor.

[85] *A most refined occupation, certainly!*

Spoken ironically. The occupation of a fisherman, and, indeed, any occupation which involved the sin of slaughtering animals, was considered despicable. Fishermen, butchers, and leather-sellers, were equally objects of scorn. In Lower Bengal the castes of Jáliyás and Bágdis, who live by fishing, etc., are amongst the lowest, and eke out a precarious livelihood by thieving and dacoity.

[86] *And he should not forsake it.*

The great Hindú law-giver is very peremptory in restricting special occupations (such as fishing, slaughtering animals, basket-making), to the mixed and lowest castes. 'A man of the lowest caste, who, through covetousness, lives by the acts of the highest, let the king strip of all his wealth and banish. His own business, though badly performed, is preferable to that of another, though well performed.' (Manu, x. 96.) The sacrifice of animals was enjoined on the priests of the god Śiva only.

[87] *Carp.*

That is, the Rohita, or Rohi (red) fish *(Cyprinus rohita)*, a kind of carp found in lakes and ponds in the neighbourhood of the Ganges. It grows to the length of three feet, is very voracious, and its flesh, though it often has a muddy taste, is edible. Its back is olive-coloured, its belly of a golden hue, its fins and eyes red. This fish is often caught in tanks in Lower Bengal of the weight of twenty-five or thirty pounds.

[88] *I long to begin binding the flowers round his head.*

It is evident from the Málati-Mádhava, and other plays, that a victim, about to be offered as a sacrifice, had a wreath of flowers bound round the head.

[89] *The great vernal festival.*

In celebration of the return of Spring, and said to be in honour of Kṛishṇa, and of his son Kámadeva, the god of Love. It is identified

with the Holi or Dolá-yátra, the Saturnalia, or rather, Carnival of the Hindús, when people of all conditions take liberties with each other, especially by scattering red powder and coloured water on the clothes of persons passing in the street, as described in the play called Ratnávali, where the crowd are represented as using syringes and waterpipes. Flowers, and especially the opening blossoms of the mango, would naturally be much employed for decoration at this festival, as an offering to the god of Love. It was formerly held on the full moon of the month Chaitra, or about the beginning of April, but is now celebrated on the full moon of Phálguna, or about the beginning of March. The other great Hindú festival, held in the autumn, about October, is called Durgá-pújá, being in honour of the goddess Durgá. The Holi festival is now so disfigured by unseemly practices and coarse jests that it is reprobated by the respectable natives, and will, probably, in the course of time, either die out or be prohibited by legal enactment.

[90] *Am not I named after the Koïl?*

Compare note 66.

[91] *Thy five unerring shafts.*

Compare note 47.

[92] *The amaranth.*

That is, the Kuruvaka, either the crimson amaranth, or a purple species of *Barleria.*

[93] *My finger burning with the glow of love.*

However offensive to our notions of good taste, it is certain that, in Hindú erotic poetry, a hot hand is considered to be one of the signs of passionate love. Compare Othello, Act III., Scene 4. 'Give me your hand: this hand is moist, my lady—hot, hot, and moist.'

[94] *The airy vapours of the desert.*

A kind of mirage floating over waste places, and appearing at a distance like water. Travellers and some animals, especially deer, are supposed to be attracted and deceived by it.

[95] *Himálaya.*

The name of this celebrated range of mountains is derived from two Sanskṛit words, *hima*, 'ice,' or 'snow' (Lat. *hiems*), and *álaya*, 'abode.' The pronunciation Himaláya is incorrect.

[96] *As Śiva did the poison at the Deluge.*

At the churning of the ocean, after the Deluge, by the gods and demons, for the recovery or production of fourteen sacred things, a deadly poison called Kála-kúṭa, or Halá-hala, was generated, so virulent that it would have destroyed the world, had not the god Śiva swallowed it. Its only effect was to leave a dark blue mark on his throat, whence his name Nila-kaṇṭha. This name is also given to a beautiful bird, not wholly unlike our jay, common in Bengal.

[97] *Palace of clouds.*

The palace of king Dushyanta, so called because it was lofty as the clouds.

[98] *The foreman of a guild belonging to Ayodhyá.*

The chief of a guild or corporation of artisans practising the same trade. Ayodhyá, or the Invincible City, was the ancient capital of Râma-chandra, founded by Ikshwáku, the first of the solar dynasty. It was situated on the river Sarayu in the north of India, and is now called Oude.

[99] *My ancestors*
Must drink these glistening tears, the last libation.

Oblations to the manes of the deceased were offered by the nearest surviving relatives soon after death; and were repeated once or, according to some, twice in every year. They were supposed to be necessary to secure the residence of the souls of the dead in the world appropriated to the manes. The ceremony itself was called Śráddha, and generally consisted in offering a cake made of rice and milk, or in pouring out water,

or water and sesamum-seed mixed. These ceremonies still take place in India, and their celebration is marked by magnificent feasts, to which relations and a host of Bráhmans are invited. A native who had grown rich unlawfully in the time of Warren Hastings, is known to have spent nine lakhs of rupees on his mother's Śráddha; and large sums, though not, perhaps, equal to the above, are still spent on similar occasions by wealthy Hindús.

100 *The mother of the great Indra.*

That is Aditi, the wife of Kaśyapa, with whom, in their sacred retreat, Śakoontalá was enjoying an asylum.

101 *Distinguishes the milk from worthless water.*

The Hindús imagine that the flamingo (a kind of swan) is the vehicle on which the god Brahmá is borne through the air; and that this bird, being fond of the pulpy fibres of the water-lily, has been gifted by him with the power of separating the milky from the watery portion of the juice contained in the stalk of that plant.

102 *Mátali.*

The charioteer of Indra. In the pictures which represent this god mounted on his usual vehicle, an elephant (called Airávata), Mátali is seen seated before him on the withers of the animal, acting as its driver. In the plays, however, Indra is generally represented borne in a chariot drawn by two horses, guided by Mátali.

103 *Kálanemi.*

A Daitya or demon, with a hundred arms and as many heads.

104 *Nárada.*

A celebrated divine sage, usually reckoned among the ten patriarchs first created by Brahmá. He acted as a messenger of the gods.

[105] *Tinged with celestial sandal from the breast.*

The breast of Indra was dyed yellow with a fragrant kind of sandal-wood (*hari-chandana*); and the garland, by rubbing against it, became tinged with the same colour. Wreaths and garlands of flowers were much used by the Hindús as marks of honorary distinction, as well as for ornament on festive occasions. They were suspended round the neck.

[106] *The ever-blooming tree of Nandana.*

That is, Mandára, one of the five ever-blooming trees of Nandana, or Swarga, Indra's heaven. The two most celebrated of these trees were the Párijáta and the Kalpa-druma, or tree granting all desires. Each of the superior Hindú gods has a heaven, paradise, or Elysium of his own. That of Brahmá is called Brahma-loka, situate on the summit of Mount Meru; that of Vishṇu is Vaikuṇṭha, on the Himálayas; that of Śiva and Kuvera is Kailása, also on the Himálayas; that of Indra is Swarga or Nandana. The latter, though properly on one of the points of Mount Meru, below Brahmá's paradise, is sometimes identified with the sphere of the sky or heaven in general.

[107] *Jayanta.*

The son of Indra by his favourite wife Paulomí or Śachí.

[108] *The lion-man's terrific claws.*

Vishṇu, in the monstrous shape of a creature half man, half lion (which was his fourth Avatár or incarnation) delivered the three worlds, that is to say, earth, heaven and the lower regions, from the tyranny of an insolent demon called Hiraṇya-kaśipu.

[109] *We journey in the path of Parivaha.*

The Hindús divide the heavens into seven Márgas, paths or orbits, assigning a particular wind to each. The sixth of these paths is that of

the Great Bear, and its peculiar wind is called Parivaha. This wind is supposed to bear along the seven stars of Ursa Major, and to propel the heavenly Ganges.

110 *The triple Ganges.*

The Ganges was supposed to take its rise in the toe of Vishṇu (whence one of its names, Vishṇu-padí); thence it flowed through the heavenly sphere, being borne along by the wind Parivaha and identified with the Mandákiní, or Milky Way. Its second course is through the earth; but the weight of its descent was borne by Siva's head, whence, after wandering among the tresses of his hair, it descended through a chasm in the Himálayas. Its third course is through Pátála, or the lower regions, the residence of the Daityas and Nágas, and not to be confounded with Naraka, 'hell,' 'the place of punishment.'

111 *He spanned the heavens in his second stride.*

The story of Vishṇu's second stride was this:—An Asura, or Daitya, named Bali, had, by his devotions, gained the dominion of Heaven, Earth and Pátála. Vishṇu undertook to trick him out of his power, and assuming the form of a Vámana, or dwarf (his fifth Avatár), he appeared before the giant and begged as a boon as much land as he could pace in three steps. This was granted: and the god immediately expanded himself till he filled the world; deprived Bali, at the first step, of Earth; at the second, of Heaven; but, in consideration of some merit, left Pátála still under his rule.

112 *I see the moisture-loving Chátakas.*

The Chátaka is a kind of Cuckoo (*Cuculus Melanoleucus*). The Hindús suppose that it drinks only the water of the clouds, and their poets usually introduce allusions to this bird in connexion with cloudy or rainy weather.

113 *Golden-peak.*

A sacred range of mountains lying among the Himálaya chain, and apparently identical with, or immediately adjacent to Kailása, the paradise

of Kuvera, the god of wealth. It is here described as the mountain of the Kimpurushas, or servants of Kuvera. They are a dwarfish kind of monster, with the body of a man and the head of a horse, and are otherwise called Kinnara.

114 *Kasyapa.*

Kaśyapa was the son of Brahmâ's son, Maríchi; and was one of those Patriarchs (created by Brahmâ to supply the universe with inhabitants), who after fulfilling their mission, retired from the world to practice penance. He was a progenitor on a magnificent scale, as he is considered to have been the father of the gods, demons, man, fish, reptiles and all animals, by the thirteen daughters of Daksha. The eldest of the thirteen, his favourite wife, was Aditi, from whom were born Indra and all the inferior gods, and particularly the twelve Adityas, or forms of the sun, which represent him in the several months of the year. From Diti, Danu, and others of the remaining twelve, came the Daityas, Dánavas, and other demons.

115 *No sacred cord is twined.*

The serpent's skin was used by the ascetic in place of the regular Bráhmanical cord. This thread or cord, sometimes called the sacrificial cord, might be made of various substances, such as cotton, hempen or woollen thread, according to the class of the wearer; and was worn over the left shoulder and under the right. The rite of investiture with this thread, which conferred the title of 'twice-born,' and corresponded in some respects with the Christian rite of baptism, was performed on youths of the first three classes (compare note 80), at ages varying from eight to sixteen, from eleven to twenty-two, and from twelve to twenty-four, respectively. At present the Bráhmans alone, and a few who claim to be Kshatriyas, have a right to wear this thread. Not long since, a Káyath (or man of the writer caste) in Bengal, who attempted to claim it, was excommunicated.

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116 *And birds construct their nests within its folds.*

Such was the immoveable impassiveness of this ascetic, that the ants had thrown up their mound as high as his waist without being disturbed, and birds had built their nests in his hair.

117 *And need no other nourishment.*

The Hindús imagine that living upon air is a proof of the highest degree of spirituality to which a man can attain.

118 *Aśoka-tree.*

The Aśoka (*Jonesia Asoka*) is one of the most beautiful of Indian trees. Sir W. Jones observes that 'the vegetable world scarce exhibits a richer sight than an Asoka-tree in full bloom. It is about as high as an ordinary cherry tree. The flowers are very large, and beautifully diversified with tints of orange-scarlet, of pale yellow, and of bright orange, which form a variety of shades according to the age of the blossom.'

119 *And with his artless smiles*
Gladdens their hearts.

Chézy is enraptured with this verse: '. . . strophe incomparable, que tout père, ou plutôt toute mère, ne pourra lire sans sentir battre son cœur, tant le poète a su y rendre, avec les nuances les plus délicates, l'expression vivante de l'amour maternel.' Compare Statius, Theb., Book v., line 613.

'Heu ubi siderei vultus? ubi verba ligatis
Imperfecta sonis? risusque et murmura soli
Intellecta mihi?'

120 *It is against propriety to make too minute inquiries about the wife of another man.*

The Hindús were very careful to screen their wives from the curiosity of strangers; and their great lawgiver, Manu, enjoined that married

women should be cautiously guarded by their husbands in the inner apartments (*antahpura*) appropriated to women (called by the Muḥammadans Haram, and in common parlance in India *andar-mahdll.*) . The chief duty of a married woman's life seems to have been to keep as quiet as possible, to know as little as possible, to hear, see and inquire about nothing; and above all, to avoid being herself the subject of conversation or inquiry; in short, the sole end and object of her existence was to act as a good head-servant, yielding to her husband a servile obedience, regulating the affairs of his family, preparing his daily food, and superintending his household (Manu IX., 11, 16). But, notwithstanding the social restrictions to which women were subjected, even in the earlier periods of Indian history, it seems probable that they were not rigidly excluded from general society until after the introduction of Muḥammadan customs into India. It appears from the plays that they were allowed to go into public on certain occasions; they took part in bridal processions, and were permitted to enter the temples of the gods. Śakoontalâ appears in the court of King Dushyanta, and pleads her own cause: and Vâsavadattâ, in the 'Ratnâvali,' holds a conversation with her father's envoy. Even in later times the presence of men, other than husbands or sons, in the inner apartments, was far from being prohibited. See Wilson's 'Hindû Theatre,' xliii.

121 *Her long hair*
Twined in a single braid.

The Hindû women collect their hair into a single long braid as a sign of mourning, when their husbands are dead or absent for a long period.

122 *Shines forth from dim eclipse.*

The following is the Hindû notion of an eclipse:—A certain demon, which had the tail of a dragon, was decapitated by Vishṇu at the churning of the ocean; but, as he had previously tasted of the Amṛit or nectar reproduced at that time, he was thereby rendered immortal, and his head

and tail, retaining their separate existence, were transferred to the stellar sphere. The head was called Ráhu, and became the cause of eclipses, by endeavouring at various times to swallow the sun and moon. So in the 'Hitopadeśa,' line 192, the moon is said to be eaten by Ráhu. With regard to the love of the Moon for Rohiṇí, the fourth lunar constellation, see note 53.

[123] *All unadorned.*

That is, from the absence of colouring or paint.

[124] *The power of darkness.*

According to the Hindú philosophy there were three qualities or properties incident to the state of humanity, viz.: 1. *Sattwa*, 'excellence' or 'goodness' (quiescence), whence proceed truth, knowledge, purity, etc. 2. *Rajas*, 'passion' or 'foulness' (activity), which produces lust, pride, falsehood, etc., and is the cause of pain. 3. *Tamas*, 'darkness' (inertia), whence proceed ignorance, infatuation, delusion, mental blindness, etc.

[125] *Children of Brahmá's sons.*

Kaśyapa and Aditi were the children of Maríchi and Daksha respectively, and these last were the sons of Brahmá.

[126] *The ruler of the triple world.*

That is, Indra, lord of heaven, earth, and the lower regions. Compare notes 110, 113.

[127] *Whom Vishṇu, greater than the Self-existent.*

Vishṇu, as Náráyaṇa, or the Supreme Spirit, moved over the waters before the creation of the world, and from his navel came the lotus from which Brahmá, or the Self-existent, sprang. As Vishṇu, the Preserver, he became incarnate in various forms; and chose Kaśyapa and Aditi, from whom all human beings were descended, as his medium of incarnation, especially in the Avatár in which he was called Upendra, 'Indra's younger brother.' Hence it appears that the worshippers of Vishṇu exalt him above the Creator.

128 *The earth's seven sea-girt isles.*

According to the mythical geography of the Hindús, the earth consisted of seven islands, or rather insular continents, surrounded by seven seas. That inhabited by men was called Jambudwípa, and was in the centre, having in the middle of it the sacred mountain Meru or Sumeru, a kind of Mount Olympus, inhabited by the gods. About Jambu flowed the sea of salt-water which extends to the second Dwípa, called Plaksha, which is in its turn surrounded by a sea of sugar-cane juice. And so with the five other Dwípas, viz., Śálmali, Kusa, Krauncha, Śáka and Pushkara, which are severally surrounded by the seas of wine, clarified butter, curds, milk and fresh-water.

129 *Bharata.*

The name Bharata is derived from the root *bhṛi* (fero) 'to support.' Many Indian princes were so named, but the most celebrated was this son of Dushyanta and Śakoontalá, who so extended his empire that from him the whole of India was called Bharata-varsha or Bhárata-varsha; and whose descendants, the sons of Dhṛitaráshṭra and Páṇḍu, by their quarrels, formed the subject of the great epic poem called Mahábhárata. The Hindús at the present day continue to call India by the name Bharata-varsha.

130 *The Sage Bharata.*

The Bharata here intended must not be confounded with the young prince. He was a holy sage, the director or manager of the gods' dramas, and inventor of theatrical representations in general. He wrote a work containing precepts and rules relating to every branch of dramatic writing, which appears to have been lost, but is constantly quoted by the commentators.

131 *Saraswati.*

The wife of the god Brahmá. She is the goddess of speech and eloquence, patroness of the arts and sciences, and inventress of the Sanskrit language. There is a festival still held in her honour for two days, about February in every year, when no Hindú will touch a pen or write a letter. The courts are all closed accordingly.